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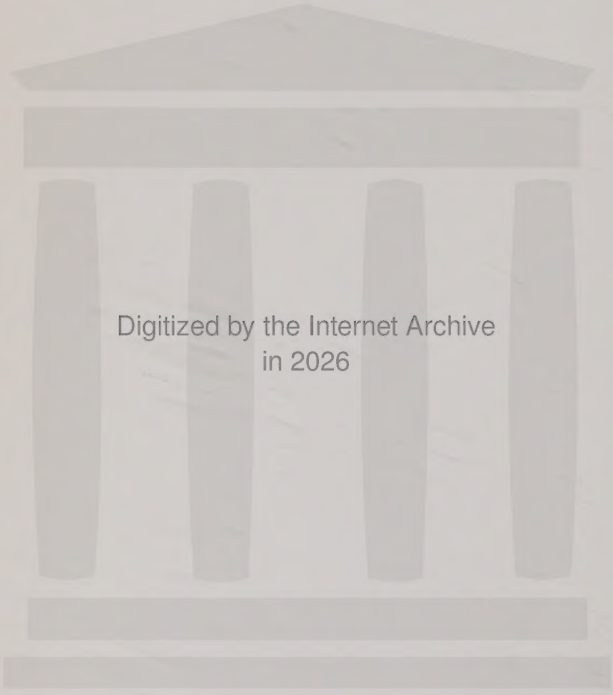
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"Lullaby"

59

Memorial Edition #8

The Complete Works of James Whitcomb Riley

IN TEN VOLUMES

Including Poems and Prose Sketches, many of which have not heretofore been published; an authentic Biography, an elaborate Index and numerous Illustrations in color from Paintings by Howard Chandler Christy and Ethel Franklin Betts

VOLUME II

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The Complete Works of James Whitcomb Riley

T. C. PHILIPS

O NOBLE heart, and brave impetuous hand!
So all engrossed in work of public weal
Thou couldst not pause thy own distress to feel
While maladies of Wrong oppressed the land.
The hopes that marshaled at thy pen's command
To cheer the Right, had not the power to heal
The ever-aching wounds thou didst conceal
Beneath a front so stoically bland
That no one guessed thy inward agony,—
Until the Master, leaning from his throne,
Heard some soul wailing in an undertone,
And bending lower down, discovered thee,
And clasped thy weary hand within His own
And lifted thee to rest eternally.

A DREAM UNFINISHED

ONLY a dream unfinished; only a form at rest
With weary hands clasped lightly over a peaceful breast.

And the lonesome light of summer through the open doorway falls,
But it wakes no laugh in the parlor—no voice in the vacant halls.

It throws no spell of music over the slumbrous air;
It meets no step on the carpet—no form in the easy chair.

It finds no queenly presence blessing the solitude
With the gracious benediction of royal womanhood.

It finds no willowy figure tilting the cage that swings
With the little pale canary that forgets the song he sings.

No face at the open window to welcome the fragrant breeze;
No touch at the old piano to waken the sleeping keys.

The idle book lies open, and the folded leaf is pressed
Over the half-told story while death relates the rest.

Only a dream unfinished; only a form at rest,
With weary hands clasped lightly over a peaceful breast.

The light steals into the corner where the darkest shadows are,
And sweeps with its golden fingers the strings of the mute guitar.

And over the drooping mosses it clambers the rustic stand,
And over the ivy's tresses it trails a trembling hand.

But it brings no smile from the darkness—it calls no face from the gloom—
No song flows out of the silence that aches in the empty room.

And we look in vain for the dawning in the depths
of our despair,
Where the weary voice goes wailing through the
empty aisles of prayer.

And the hands reach out through the darkness for
the touches we have known
When the icy palms lay warmly in the pressure of
our own:

When the folded eyes were gleaming with a glory
God designed
To light a way to Heaven by the smiles they left
behind.

Only a dream unfinished; only a form at rest
With weary hands clasped lightly over a peaceful
breast.

A CHILD'S HOME—LONG AGO

READ AT AN OLD SETTLERS' MEETING AT OAKLAND, INDIANA, AUGUST 3, 1878.

THE terse old maxim of the poet's pen,
"What constitutes a state? High-minded men,"
Holds such a wealth of truth, when one reflects,
It seems more like a sermon than a text.
Yet looking dimly backward o'er the years
Where first the face of progress, through our tears,
Smiles on us, where within the forest gloom
The bud of Indiana bursts in bloom;
We can but see, from Lake of Michigan,
To where Ohio rolls, the work of man—
From where our eastern boundary-line is pressed,
To where the Wabash revels on the west;
A broad expanse of fair and fertile land,
Like some rich landscape, from a master's hand,
That in its rustic frame, we well might call
The fairest picture on Columbia's wall—
A picture now—a masterpiece divine,
That, ere the artist's hand in its design

Had traced this loveliness, was but a blot
Of ugly pigment on a barren spot—
A blur of color on a hueless ground
Where scarce a hint of beauty could be found.
But patiently the hand of labor wrought,
And from each touch new inspiration caught;
Toiled on through disadvantages untold,
And at each onward step found firmer hold,
And obstacles that threatened long delay
He climbed above and went upon his way,
Until at last, exulting, he could see
The sweet reward of patient industry;
And beauties he had hardly dared to dream,
In hill and vale, and cliff and winding stream,
Spread out before his vision, till the soul
Within him seemed to leap beyond control,
And hover over lands the genii made
Of sifted sunshine and of dew-washed shade.

And who, indeed, that loves his native state,
Has not a heart to throb and palpitate
With ecstacy, as o'er her wintry past,
He sees the sun of summer dawn at last,
And catches, through the misty shower of light,
Dim glimpses of the orchards' bloom of white,
And fields beyond where, waving empty sleeves,
The "scarecrow" beckons to the feathered thieves
That perch, and perk their nimble heads away,
And flit away with harsh, discordant cry,
Or shading with his hand, his dazzled eyes,
Looks out across the deadened paradise,

Where wild flowers blossom, and the ivy clings,
And from the ruined oak the grapevine swings,
While high above upon the leafless tree
The red-head drummer beats his reveille,
And, like an army thronging at the sound,
The soldier corn-stalks on their battle-ground
March on to harvest victories, and flaunt
Their banners o'er the battlements of want!

And musing thus to-day, the pioneer
Whose brawny arm has grubbed a pathway here,
Stands, haply; with his vision backward turned
To where the log-heap of the past was burned,
And sees again, as in some shadowy dream,
The wild deer bending o'er the hidden stream,
Or sniffing, with his antlers lifted high,
The gawky crane, as he comes trailing by,
And drops in shallow tides below to wade
On tilting legs through dusky depths of shade,
While just across the glossy otter slips
Like some wet shadow 'neath the ripple's lips
As, drifting from the thicket-hid bayou,
The wild duck paddles past his rendezvous,
And overhead the beech and sycamore,
That lean their giant forms from either shore,
Clasp hands and bow their heads, as though to bless
In whispered prayer the sleeping wilderness.
A scene of such magnificent expanse
Of nameless grandeur that the utterance
Of even feathered orators is faint.
For here the dove's most melancholy plaint

Invokes no echo, and the killdeer's call
Swoons in the murmur of the waterfall
That, faint and far away and undefined,
Falls like a ghost of sound upon the mind.
The voice of nature's very self drops low,
As though she whispered of the long ago,
When down the wandering stream the rude canoe
Of some lone trapper glided into view,
And loitered down the watery path that led
Through forest depths that only knew the tread
Of savage beasts; and wild barbarians
That skulked about with blood upon their hands
And murder in their hearts. The light of day
Might barely pierce the gloominess that lay
Like some dark pall across the water's face,
And folded all the land in its embrace;
The panther's whimper, and the bear's low growl—
The snake's sharp rattle, and the wolf's wild howl;
The owl's grim chuckle, as it rose and fell
In alternation with the Indian's yell,
Made fitting prelude for the gory plays
That were enacted in the early days.

But fancy, soaring o'er the storm of grief
Like that lone bird that brought the olive leaf,
Brings only peace—an amulet whose spell
Works stranger marvels than the tongue can tell—
For o'er the vision, like a mirage, falls
The old log cabin with its dingy walls,
And crippled chimney with its crutch-like prop
Beneath a sagging shoulder at the top:

The coonskin battened fast on either side—
The wisps of leaf-tobacco—"cut-and-dried";
The yellow strands of quartered apples, hung
In rich festoons that tangle in among
The morning-glory vines that clamber o'er
The little clapboard roof above the door:
The old well-sweep that drops a courtesy
To every thirsting soul so graciously,
The stranger, as he drains the dripping gourd,
Intuitively murmurs, "Thank the Lord!"
Again through mists of memory arise
The simple scenes of home before the eyes:—
The happy mother, humming, with her wheel,
The dear old melodies that used to steal
So drowsily upon the summer air,
The house-dog hid his bone, forgot his care,
And nestled at her feet, to dream, perchance,
Some cooling dream of winter-time romance:
The square of sunshine through the open door
That notched its edge across the puncheon floor,
And made a golden coverlet whereon
The god of slumber had a picture drawn
Of Babyhood, in all the loveliness
Of dimpled cheek and limb and linsey dress:
The bough-filled fireplace, and the mantel wide,
Its fire-scorched ankles stretched on either side,
Where, perched upon its shoulders 'neath the joist,
The old clock hiccoughed, harsh and husky-voiced,
And snarled the premonition, dire and dread,
When it should hammer Time upon the head:

Tomatoes, red and yellow, in a row,
Preserved not then for diet, but for show,—
Like rare and precious jewels in the rough
Whose worth was not appraised at half enough:
The jars of jelly, with their dusty tops;
The bunch of pennyroyal; the cordial drops;
The flask of camphor, and the vial of squills,
The box of buttons, garden-seeds, and pills;
And, ending all the mantel's bric-à-brac,
The old, time-honored "Family Almanack."
And Memory, with a mother's touch of love,
Climbs with us to the dusky loft above,
Where drowsily we trail our fingers in
The mealy treasures of the harvest bin;
And, feeling with our hands the open track,
We pat the bag of barley on the back;
And, groping onward through the mellow gloom,
We catch the hidden apple's faint perfume,
And, mingling with it, fragrant hints of pear
And musky melon ripening somewhere.
Again we stretch our limbs upon the bed
Where first our simple childish prayers were said;
And while, without, the gallant cricket trills
A challenge to the solemn whippoorwills,
And, filing on the chorus with his glee,
The katydid whets all the harmony
To feather-edge of incoherent song,
We drop asleep, and peacefully along
The current of our dreams we glide away
To the dim harbor of another day,

Where brown toil waits for us, and where labor
stands
To welcome us with rough and horny hands.

And who will mock the rude, unpolished ways
That swayed us in the good old-fashioned days
When labor wore the badge of manhood, set
Upon his tawny brow in pearls of sweat?
Who dares to-day to turn a scornful eye
On labor in his swarthy majesty?
Or wreathe about his lips the sneer of pride
Where brawny toil stands towering at his side?
By industry alone we gauge the worth
Of all the richer nations of the earth;
And side by side with honesty and toil
Prosperity walks round the furrowed soil
That belts the world, and o'er the ocean ledge
Tilts up the horn of plenty on its edge.
'Tis not the subject fawning to the king,
'Tis not the citizen, low cowering
Before the throne of state.—'Twas God's intent
Each man should be a king—a president;
And while through human veins the blood of pride
Shall ebb and flow in Labor's rolling tide,
The brow of toil shall wear the diadem,
And justice gleaming there, the central gem,
Shall radiate the time when we shall see
Each man rewarded as his works shall be.
Thank God for this bright promise! Lift the voice
Till all the waiting multitudes rejoice;

Reach out across the sea and clap your hands
Till voices waken out of foreign lands
To join the song, while listening Heaven waits
To roll an answering anthem through the gates.

FOR the Song's sake; even so:
Humor it, and let it go
All untamed and wild of wing—
Leave it ever truanting.

Be its flight elusive!—Lo,
For the Song's sake—even so.—
Yield it but an ear as kind
As thou perkest to the wind.

Who will name us what the seas
Have sung on for centuries?
For the Song's sake! Even so—
Sing, O Seas! and Breezes, blow!

Sing! or Wave or Wind or Bird—
Sing! nor ever afterward
Clear thy meaning to us—No!—
For the Song's sake. Even so.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

KRUNG	King—*of the* Spirks
CRESTILLOMEEM	*The* Queen—*Second Consort to* Krung
SPRAIVOLL	*The* Tune-Fool
AMPHINE	Prince—*Son of* Krung
DWAINIE	*A* Princess—*of the* Wunks
JUCKLET	*A* Dwarf—*of the* Spirks
CREECH *and* GRITCHFANG	Nightmares

Counselors, Courtiers, Heralds, etc.

THE FLYING ISLANDS OF THE NIGHT

ACT I

PLACE—THE FLYING ISLANDS

SCENE I. Spirkland. *Time, Moondawn. Interior Court of* KRUNG. *A vast, pendant star burns dimly in dome above throne.* CRESTILLOMEEM *discovered languidly reclining at foot of empty throne, an overturned goblet lying near, as though just drained. The* Queen, *in seeming dazed, ecstatic state, raptly gazing upward, listening. Swarming forms and features in air above, seen eerily coming and going, blending and intermingling in domed ceiling-spaces of court. Weird music. Mystic, luminous, beautiful faces detached from swarm, float singly forward,—tremulously, and in succession, poising in mid-air and chanting.*

FIRST FACE

And who hath known her—like as *I*
Have known her?—since the envying sky

Filched from her cheeks its morning hue,
And from her eyes its glory, too,
Of dazzling shine and diamond-dew.

SECOND FACE

I knew her—long and long before
High Æo loosed her palm and thought:
"What awful splendor have I wrought
To dazzle earth and Heaven, too!"

THIRD FACE

I knew her—long ere Night was o'er—
Ere Æo yet conjectured what
To fashion Day of—ay, before
He sprinkled stars across the floor
Of dark, and swept that form of mine,
E'en as a fleck of blinded shine,
Back to the black where light was not.

FOURTH FACE

Ere day was dreamt, I saw her face
Lift from some starry hiding-place
Where our old moon was kneeling while
She lit its features with her smile.

FIFTH FACE

I knew her while these islands yet
Were nestlings—ere they feathered wing,

Or e'en could gape with them or get
Apoise the laziest-ambling breeze,
Or cheep, chirp out, or anything!
When Time crooned rhymes of nurseries
Above them—nodded, dozed and slept,
And knew it not, till, wakening,
The morning stars agreed to sing
And Heaven's first tender dews were wept.

Sixth Face

I knew her when the jealous hands
Of Angels set her sculptured form
Upon a pedestal of storm
And let her to this land with strands
Of twisted lightnings.

Seventh Face

And I heard
Her voice ere she could tone a word
Of any but the Seraph-tongue.—
And O sad-sweeter than all sung-
Or word-said things!—to hear her say,
Between the tears she dashed away:—
"Lo, launched from the offended sight
Of Æo!—anguish infinite
Is ours, O Sisterhood of Sin!
Yet is thy service mine by right,
And, sweet as I may rule it, thus

Shall Sin's myrrh-savor taste to us—
Sin's Empress—let my reign begin!"

CHORUS OF SWARMING FACES

We follow thee forever on!
Through darkest night and dimmest dawn;
Through storm and calm—through shower and shine,
Hear thou our voices answering thine:
We follow—*craving* but to be
Thy followers.—We follow thee—
We follow, follow, follow thee!

We follow ever on and on—
O'er hill and hollow, brake and lawn;
Through gruesome vale and dread ravine
Where light of day is never seen.—
We waver not in loyalty,—
Unfaltering we follow thee—
We follow, follow, follow thee!

We follow ever on and on!
The shroud of night around us drawn,
Though wet with mists, is wild-ashine
With stars to light that path of thine;—
The glowworms, too, befriend us—we
Shall fail not as we follow thee.
We follow, follow, follow thee!

We follow ever on and on.—
The notchèd reeds we pipe upon
Are pithed with music, keener blown
And blither where thou leadest lone—
Glad pangs of its ecstatic glee
Shall reach thee as we follow thee.
We follow, follow, follow thee!

We follow ever on and on:
We know the ways thy feet have gone,—
The grass is greener, and the bloom
Of roses richer in perfume—
And the birds of every blooming tree
Sing sweeter as we follow thee.
We follow, follow, follow thee!

We follow ever on and on;
For wheresoever thou hast gone
We hasten joyous, knowing there
Is sweeter sin than otherwhere—
Leave still its latest cup, that we
May drain it as we follow thee.
We follow, follow, follow thee!

[*Throughout final stanzas, faces in foreground and forms in background slowly vanish, and voices gradually fail to sheer silence.*—CRESTILLOMEEM *rises and wistfully gazes and listens; then, evidently regaining wonted self, looks to be assured of being wholly alone—then speaks.*]

CRESTILLOMEEM

The Throne is throwing wide its gilded arms
To welcome me. The Throne of Krung! Ha! ha!
Leap up, ye lazy echoes, and laugh loud!
For I, Crestillomeem, the Queen—ha! ha!
Do fling my richest mirth into your mouths
That ye may fatten ripe with mockery!
I marvel what the kingdom would become
Were I not here to nurse it like a babe
And dandle it above the reach and clutch
Of intermeddlers in the royal line
And their attendant serfs. *Ho!* Jucklet, ho!
'Tis time my knarled warp of nice anatomy
Were here, to weave us on upon our mesh
Of silken villanies. *Ho!* Jucklet, ho!

[*Lifts secret door in pave and drops a star-bud through opening. Enter* JUCKLET *from below.*]

JUCKLET

Spang 'sprit! my gracious Queen! but thou hast scorched
My left ear to a cinder! and my head
Rings like a ding-dong on the coast of death!
For, patient hate! thy hasty signal burst
Full in my face as hitherward I came!
But though my lug be fried to crisp, and my
Singed wig stinks like a little sun-stewed Wunk,
I stretch my fragrant presence at thy feet
And kiss thy sandal with a blistered lip.

CRESTILLOMEEM

Hold! rare-done fool, lest I may bid the cook
To bake thee brown! How fares the King by this?

JUCKLET

Safe couched midmost his lordly hoard of books,
I left him sleeping like a quinsied babe
Next the guest-chamber of a poor man's house:
But ere I came away, to rest mine ears,
I salved his welded lids, uncorked his nose,
And o'er the odorous blossom of his lips
Re-squeezed the tinctured sponge, and felt his pulse
Come staggering back to regularity.
And four hours hence his Highness will awake
And *Peace* will take a nap!

CRESTILLOMEEM

Ha! What mean you?

JUCKLET [*Ominously*]

I mean that he suspects our knaveries.—
Some covert spy is burrowed in the court—
Nay, and I pray thee startle not *aloud,*
But mute thy very heart in its out-throb,
And let the blanching of thy cheeks but be
A whispering sort of pallor!

CRESTILLOMEEM

A spy?—Here?

JUCKLET

Ay, *here*—and haply even *now*. And one
Whose unseen eye seems ever focused keen
Upon our action, and whose hungering ear
Eats every crumb of counsel that we drop
In these our secret interviews!—For he—
The King—through all his talking-sleep to-day
Hath jabbered of intrigue, conspiracy—
Of treachery and hate in fellowship,
With dire designs upon his royal bulk,
To oust it from the Throne.

CRESTILLOMEEM

He spake my name?

JUCKLET

O Queen, he speaks not ever but thy name
Makes melody of every sentence.—Yea,
He thinks thee even true to him as thou
Art fickle, false and subtle! O how blind
And lame, and deaf and dumb, and worn and weak,
And faint, and sick, and all-commodious
His dear love is! In sooth, O wifely one,
Thy malleable spouse doth mind me of

That pliant hero of the bald old catch
"The Lovely Husband."—Shall I wreak the thing?

[*Sings—with much affected gravity and grimace*]

O a lovely husband he was known,
He loved his wife and her a-lone;
She reaped the harvest he had sown;
She ate the meat; he picked the bone.
With mixed admirers every size,
She smiled on each without disguise;
This lovely husband closed his eyes
Lest he might take her by surprise.

[*Aside, exclamatory*]

Chorious uproarious!

[*Then pantomime as though pulling at bell-rope—singing in pent, explosive utterance*]

Trot!
Run!
Wasn't he a handy hubby?

What
Fun
She could plot and plan!
Not
One
Other such a dandy hubby
As this lovely man!

CRESTILLOMEEM

Or talk or tune, wilt thou wind up thy tongue
Nor let it tangle in a knot of words!
What said the King?

JUCKLET [*With recovered reverence*]

He said: "Crestillomeem—
O that *she* knew this thick distress of mine!—
Her counsel would *anoint* me and her voice
Would flow in limpid wisdom o'er my woes
And, like a love-balm, lave my secret grief
And lull my sleepless heart!" [*Aside*] And so went on,
Struggling all maudlin in the wrangled web
That well-nigh hath cocooned him!

CRESTILLOMEEM

Did he yield
No hint of this mysterious distress
He needs must hold sequestered from his Queen?
What said he in his talking-sleep by which
Some clue were gained of how and when and whence
His trouble came?

JUCKLET

In one strange phase he spake
As though some sprited lady talked with him.—

Full courteously he said: "In woman's guise
Thou comest, yet I think thou art, in sooth,
But woman in thy form.—Thy words are strange
And leave me mystified. I feel the truth
Of all thou hast declared, and yet so vague
And shadow-like thy meaning is to me,
I know not how to act to ward the blow
Thou sayest is hanging o'er me even now."
And then, with open hands held pleadingly,
He asked, "Who *is* my foe?"—And o'er his face
A sudden pallor flashed, like death itself,
As though, if answer had been given, it
Had fallen like a curse.

CRESTILLOMEEM

I'll stake my soul
Thrice over in the grinning teeth of doom,
'Tis Dwainie of the Wunks who peeks and peers
With those fine eyes of hers in our affairs
And carries Krung, in some disguise, these hints
Of our intent! See thou that silence falls
Forever on her lips, and that the sight
She wastes upon our secret action blurs
With gray and grisly scum that shall for aye
Conceal us from her gaze while she writhes blind
And fangless as the fat worms of the grave!
Here! take this tuft of downy druze, and when
Thou comest on her, fronting full and fair,
Say *"Sherzham!"* thrice, and fluff it in her face.

JUCKLET

Thou knowest scanty magic, O my Queen,
But all thou dost is fairly excellent—
An *this* charm work, thou shalt have fuller faith
Than still I must withhold.

[*Takes charm, with extravagant salutation*]

CRESTILLOMEEM

Thou gibing knave!
Thou thing! Dost dare to name my sorcery
As any trifling gift? Behold what might
Be thine an thy deserving wavered not
In stable and abiding service to
Thy Queen!

[*She presses suddenly her palm upon his eyes, then lifts her softly opening hand upward, his gaze following, where, slowly shaping in the air above them, appears semblance—or counter-self—of* CRESTILLOMEEM, *clothed in most radiant youth, her maiden-face bent downward to a moonlit sward, where kneels a lover-knight —flawless in manly symmetry and princely beauty,—yet none other than the counter-self of* JUCKLET, *eerily and with strange sweetness singing, to some curiously tinkling instrument, the praises of its queenly mistress:* JUCKLET *and* CRESTILLOMEEM *transfixed below—trancedly gazing on their mystic selves above.*]

SEMBLANCE OF JUCKLET [*Sings*]

Crestillomeem!
Crestillomeem!
Soul of my slumber!—Dream of my dream!
Moonlight may fall not as goldenly fair
As falls the gold of thine opulent hair—
Nay, nor the starlight as dazzlingly gleam
As gleam thine eyes, 'Meema—Crestillomeem!—
Star of the skies, 'Meema—
Crestillomeem!

SEMBLANCE OF CRESTILLOMEEM [*Sings*]

O Prince divine!
O Prince divine!
Tempt thou me not with that sweet voice of thine!
Though my proud brow bear the blaze of a crown,
Lo, at thy feet must its glory bow down,
That from the dust thou mayest lift me to shine
Heaven'd in thy heart's rapture, O Prince divine!—
Queen of thy love ever,
O Prince divine!

SEMBLANCE OF JUCKLET [*Sings*]

Crestillomeem!
Crestillomeem!
Our life shall flow as a musical stream—
Windingly—placidly on it shall wend,

Marged with mazhoora-bloom banks without end—
Word-birds shall call thee and dreamily scream,
"Where dost thou cruise, 'Meema—Crestillomeem?
Whither away, 'Meema?—
Crestillomeem!"

DUO

[*Vision and voices gradually failing away*]

Crestillomeem!
Crestillomeem!
Soul of my slumber!—Dream of my dream!
Star of Love's light, 'Meema—Crestillomeem!
Crescent of Night, 'Meema!—
Crestillomeem!

[*With song, vision likewise fails utterly*]

CRESTILLOMEEM

[*To* JUCKLET, *still trancedly staring upward*]

How now, thou clabber-brainèd spudge!—
Thou squelk!—thou—

JUCKLET

Nay, O Queen! contort me not
To more condensèd littleness than now
My shamèd frame incurreth on itself,

Seeing what might fare with it, didst *thou* will
Kindly to nip it with thy magic *here*
And leave it living in that form i' the air,
Forever pranking o'er the daisied sward
In wake of sandal-prints that dint the dews
As lightly as, in thy late maidenhood,
Thine own must needs have done in flighting from
The dread encroachments of the King.

CRESTILLOMEEM

Nay—peace!

JUCKLET

So be it, O sweet Mystic.—But I crave
One service of thy magic yet.—*Amphine!*—
Breed me some special, damnèd philter for
Amphine—the *fair* Amphine!—to chuck it him,
Some serenade-tide, in a sodden slug
O' pastry, 'twixt the door-crack and a screech
O' rusty hinges.—Hey! Amphine, the *fair!*—
And let me, too, elect his doom, O Queen!—
Listed against thee, he, too, doubtless hath
Been favored with an outline of our scheme.—
And I would kick my soul all over hell
If I might juggle his fine figure up
In such a shape as mine!

CRESTILLOMEEM

Then this:—When thou
Canst come upon him bent above a flower,

Or any blooming thing, and thou, arear,
Shalt reach it first and, thwartwise, touch it fair,
And with thy knuckle flick him on the knee,—
Then—his fine form will shrink and shrivel up
As warty as a toad's—so hideous,
Thine own shall seem a marvel of rare grace!
Though idly speak'st thou of my mystic skill,
'Twas that which won the King for me;—'twas that
Bereft him of his daughter ere we had
Been wedded yet a haed:—She strangely went
Astray one moonset from the palace-steps—
She went—nor yet returned.—Was it not strange?—
She would be wedded to an alien prince
The morrow midnight—to a prince whose sire
I once knew, in lost hours of lute and song,
When *he* was but a prince—*I* but a mouth
For him to lift up sippingly and drain
To lees most ultimate of stammering sobs
And maudlin wanderings of blinded breath.

JUCKLET [*Aside*]

Twigg-brebblets! but her Majesty hath speech
That doth bejuice all metaphor to drip
And spray and mist of sweetness!

CRESTILLOMEEM [*Confusedly*]

Where was I?
O, ay!—The princess went—she strangely went!—
E'en as I deemed her lover-princeling would

As strangely go, were she not soon restored.—
As so he did:—That airy penalty
The jocund Fates provide our love-lorn wights
In this glad island: So for thrice three nights
They spun the prince his line and marked him pay
It out (despite all warnings of his doom)
In fast and sleepless search for her—and *then*
They tripped his fumbling feet and he fell—UP!—
Up!—as 'tis writ—sheer past Heaven's flinching
walls
And topmost cornices.—Up—up and on!—
And, it is grimly guessed of those who thus
For such a term bemoan an absent love,
And so fall *up*wise, they must needs fall on—
And on and on—and on—and on—and on!
Ha! ha!

JUCKLET

Quahh! but the prince's holden breath
Must ache his throat by this! But, O my Queen,
What of the princess?—and—

CRESTILLOMEEM

The princess?—Ay—
The princess! Ay, she went—she strangely went!
And when the dainty vagrant came not back—
Both sire and son in apprehensive throes
Of royal grief—the very Throne befogged
In sighs and tears!—when all hope waned at last,

And all the spies of Spirkland, in her quest,
Came straggling empty-handed home again,—
Why, then the wise King sleeved his rainy eyes
And sagely thought the pretty princess had
Strayed to the island's edge and tumbled off.
I could have set his mind at ease on that—
I could have told him,—*yea,* she tumbled off—
I tumbled her!—and tumbled her so plump,
She tumbled in an under-island, then
Just slow-unmooring from our own and poised
For unknown voyagings of flight afar
And all remote of latitudes of ours.—
Ay, into that land I tumbled her from which
But one charm known to art can tumble her
Back into this,—and *that* charm (guilt be praised!)
Is lodged not in the wit nor the desire
Of my rare lore.

JUCKLET

Thereinasmuch find joy!
But dost thou know that rumors flutter now
Among thy subjects of thy sorceries?—
The art being *banned,* thou knowest; or, unhoused,
Is unleashed pitilessly by the grim,
Facetious body of the dridular
Upon the one who fain had loosed the curse
On others.—An my counsel be worth aught,
Then have a care thy spells do not revert
Upon thyself, nor yet mine own poor hulk
O' fearsomeness!

CRESTILLOMEEM

Ha! ha! No vaguest need
Of apprehension there!—While Krung remains—

[*She abruptly pauses—startled first, then listening curiously and with awed interest. Voice of exquisite melodiousness and fervor heard singing.*]

VOICE

When kings are kings, and kings are men—
And the lonesome rain is raining!—
O who shall rule from the red throne then,
And who shall covet the scepter when—
When the winds are all complaining?

When men are men, and men are kings—
And the lonesome rain is raining!—
O who shall list as the minstrel sings
Of the crown's fiat, or the signet-ring's,
When the winds are all complaining?

CRESTILLOMEEM

Whence flows such sweetness, and what voice is that?

JUCKLET

The voice of Spraivoll, an mine ears be whet
And honéd o' late honeyéd memories

Behaunting the deserted purlieus of
The court.

CRESTILLOMEEM

And who is Spraivoll, and what song
Is that besung so blinding exquisite
Of cadenced mystery?

JUCKLET

Spraivoll—O Queen,—
Spraivoll The Tune-Fool is she fitly named
By those who meet her ere the day long wanes
And naught but janiteering sparsely frets
The cushioned silences and stagnant dusts
Indifferently resuscitated by
The drowsy varlets in mock servitude
Of so refurbishing the royal halls:
She cometh, alien, from Wunkland—so
Hath she deposed to divers questioners
Who have been smitten of her voice—as rich
In melody as she is poor in mind.
She hath been roosting, pitied of the hinds
And scullions, round about the palace here
For half a node.

CRESTILLOMEEM

And pray, where is she perched—
This wild-bird woman with her wondrous throat?

JUCKLET

Under some dingy cornice, like enough—
Though *wild-bird* she is not, being plumèd in,
Not feathers, but one fustianed stole—the like
Of which so shameth her fair face one needs
Must swear some lusty oaths, but that they shape
Themselves full gentlewise in mildest prayer:—
Not *wild-bird;*—nay, nor *woman*—though, in truth,
She ith a licensed idiot, and drifts
About, as restless and as useless, too,
As any lazy breeze in summer-time.
I'll call her forth to greet your Majesty.
Ho! Spraivoll! Ho! my twittering birdster, flit
Thou hither.

[*Enter* SPRAIVOLL—*from behind group of statuary —singing*]

SPRAIVOLL

Ting-aling! Ling-ting! Tingle-tee!
The moon spins round and round for me!
Wind it up with a golden key.
Ting-aling! Ling-ting! Tingle-tee!

CRESTILLOMEEM

Who art thou, and what the strange
Elusive beauty and intent of thy

Sweet song? What singest thou, vague, mystic-
bird—
What doth The Tune-Fool sing? Ay, sing me what.

SPRAIVOLL [*Singing*]

What sings the breene on the wertling-vine,
And the tweck on the bamner-stem?
Their song, to me, is the same as mine,
As mine is the same to them—to them—
As mine is the same to them.

In star-starved glooms where the plustre looms
With its slender boughs above,
Their song sprays down with the fragrant
blooms,—
And the song they sing is love—is love—
And the song they sing is love.

JUCKLET

Your Majesty may be surprised somewhat,
But Spraivoll can not talk,—her only mode
Of speech is melody; and thou might'st put
The dowered fool a thousand queries, and,
In like return, receive a thousand songs,
All set to differing tunes—as full of naught
As space is full of emptiness.

CRESTILLOMEEM

A fool?—
And with a gift so all-divine!—A fool?

JUCKLET

Ay, warranted!—The Flying Islands all
Might flock in mighty counsel—molt, and shake
Their loosened feathers, and sort every tuft,
Nor ever most minutely quarry there
One other Spraivoll, itching with her voice
Such favored spot of cuticle as she
Alone selects here in our blissful realm.

CRESTILLOMEEM

Out, jester, on thy cumbrous wordiness!
Come hither, Tune-Fool, and be not afraid,
For I like fools so well I married one:
And since thou art a *Queen* of fools, and he
A *King,* why, I've a mind to bring ye two
Together in some wise. Canst use thy song
All times in such entrancing spirit one
Who lists must so needs list, e'en though the song
Go on unceasingly indefinite?

SPRAIVOLL [*Singing*]

If one should ask me for a song,
  Then I should answer, and my tongue
Would twitter, trill and troll along
  Until the song were done.

Or should one ask me for my tongue,
  And I should answer with a song,
I'd trill it till the song were sung,
  And troll it all along.

CRESTILLOMEEM

Thou art indeed a fool, and one, I think,
To serve my present purposes. Give ear.—
And Jucklet, thou, go to the King and bide
His waking: then repeat these words:—"*The Queen*
Impatiently awaits his Majesty,
And craves his presence in the Tower of Stars,
That she may there express full tenderly
Her great solicitude." And *then*, end thus,—
"*So much she bade, and drooped her glowing face*
Deep in the showerings of her golden hair,
And with a flashing gesture of her arm
Turned all the moonlight pallid, saying 'Haste!'"

JUCKLET

And would it not be well to hang a pearl
Or twain upon thy silken lashes?

CRESTILLOMEEM

Go!

JUCKLET [*Exit, singing*]

This lovely husband's loyal breast
Heaved only as she might suggest,—
To every whimsy she expressed
He proudly bowed and acquiesced.
He plotted with her, blithe and gay—
In no flirtation said her nay,—

He even took her to the play,
Excused himself and came away.

CRESTILLOMEEM [*To Spraivòll*]

Now, Tune-Fool, *junior,* let me theme *thee* for
A song:—An Empress once, with angel in
Her face and devil in her heart, had wish
To breed confusion to her sovereign lord,
And work the downfall of his haughty son—
The issue of a former marriage—who
Bellowsed her hatred to the whitest heat,
For that her own son, by a former lord,
Was born a hideous dwarf, and reared aside
From the sire's knowing or his princely own—
That *none,* in sooth, might ever chance to guess
The hapless mother of the hapless child.
The Fiends that scar her thus, protect her still
With outward beauty of both face and form.—
It so is written, and so must remain
Till magic greater than their own is found
To hurl against her. So is she secure
And proof above all fear. Now, listen well!—
Her present lord is haunted with a dream,
That he is soon to pass, and so prepares
(*All havoc hath been wrangled with the drugs!*)
The Throne for the ascension of the son,
His cursèd heir, who still doth baffle all
Her arts against him, e'en as though he were
Protected by a skill beyond her own.

Soh! she, the Queen, doth rule the King in all
Save this affectionate perversity
Of favor for the son whom he would raise
To his own place.—And but for this the King
Long since had tasted death and kissed his fate
As one might kiss a bride! But so his Queen
Must needs withhold, not deal, the final blow,
She yet doth bind him, spelled, still trusting her;
And, by her craft and wanton flatteries,
Doth sway his love to every purpose but
The one most coveted.—And for this end
She would make use of thee;—and if thou dost
Her will, as her good pleasure shall direct,
Why, thou shalt sing at court, in silken tire,
Thy brow bound with wild diamonds, and thy hair
Sown with such gems as laugh hysteric lights
From glittering quespar, guenk and plennocynth,—
Ay, even panoplied as might the fair
Form of a very princess be, thy voice
Shall woo the echoes of the listening Throne.

SPRAIVOLL [*Crooning abstractedly*]

And O shall one—high brother of the air,
In deeps of space—shall he have dream as fair?—
And shall that dream be this?—In some strange
place
Of long-lost lands he finds her waiting face—
Comes marveling upon it, unaware,
Set moonwise in the midnight of her hair,

And is behaunted with old nights of May,
So his glad lips do purl a roundelay
Purloinèd from the echo-triller's beak,
Seen keenly notching at some star's blanch cheek
With its ecstatic twitterings, through dusk
And sheen of dewy boughs of bloom and musk.
For him, Love, light again the eyes of her
That show nor tears nor laughter nor surprise—
For him undim their glamour and the blur
Of dreams drawn from the depths of deepest skies.
He doth not know if any lily blows
As fair of feature, nor of any rose.

CRESTILLOMEEM [*Aside*]

O this weird woman! she doth drug mine ears
With her uncanny sumptuousness of song!
[*To Spraivoll*] Nay, nay! Give o'er thy tuneful
maunderings
And mark me further, Tune-Fool—ay, and well:—
At present doth the King lie in a sleep
Drug-wrought and deep as death—the after-phase
Of an unconscious state, in which each act
Of his throughout his waking hours is so
Rehearsed, in manner, motion, deed and word,
Her spies (the Queen's) that watch him, serving
there
As guardians o'er his royal slumbers, may
Inform her of her lord's most secret thought.
And lo, her plans have ripened even now
Till, *should he come upon this Throne to-night,*

Where eagerly his counselors will bide
His coming,—she, the Queen, hath reason to
Suspect her long-designèd purposes
May fall in jeopardy;—but if he *fail,*
Through *any* means, to lend his presence there,—
Then, by a wheedled mandate, *is his Queen*
Empowered with all Sovereignty to reign
And work the royal purposes instead.
Therefore, the Queen hath set an interview—
A conference to be holden with the King,
Which is ordained to fall on noon to-night,
Twelve star-twirls ere the nick the Throne convenes.—
And with her thou shalt go, and bide in wait
Until she signal thee to sing; and then
Shalt thou so work upon his mellow mood
With that un-Spirkly magic of thy voice—
So all bedaze his waking thought with dreams,—
The Queen may, all unnoticed, slip away,
And leave thee singing to a throneless King.

SPRAIVOLL [*Singing*]

And who shall sing for the haughty son
While the good King droops his head?—
And will he dream, when the song is done,
That a princess fair lies dead?

CRESTILLOMEEM

The haughty son hath found *his* "Song"—*sweet curse!*—

And may she sing his everlasting dirge!
She comes from that near-floating land of thine,
Naming herself a princess of that realm
So strangely peopled we would fain evade
All mergence, and remain as strange to them
As they to us. No less this Dwainie hath
Most sinuously writhed and lithed her way
Into court favor here—hath glidden past
The King's encharmèd sight and sleeked herself
Within the very altars of his house—
His line—his blood—his very life:—*AMPHINE!*
Not any Spirkland gentlemaiden might
Aspire so high as *she* hath dared to dare!—
For she, with her fair skin and finer ways,
And beauty second only to the Queen's,
Hath caught the Prince betwixt her mellow palms
And stroked him flutterless. Didst ever thou
In thy land hear of *Dwainie of the Wunks?*

SPRAIVOLL [*Singing*]

Ay, Dwainie!—My Dwainie!
The lurloo ever sings,
A tremor in his flossy crest
And in his glossy wings.
And Dwainie!—My Dwainie!
The winno-welvers call;—
But Dwainie hides in Spirkland
And answers not at all.

The teeper twitters Dwainie!—
The tcheucker on his spray

Teeters up and down the wind
And will not fly away:
And Dwainie!—My Dwainie!
The drowsy oovers drawl;—
But Dwainie hides in Spirkland
And answers not at all.

O Dwainie!—My Dwainie!
The breezes hold their breath—
The stars are pale as blossoms,
And the night as still as death:
And Dwainie!—My Dwainie!
The fainting echoes fall;—
But Dwainie hides in Spirkland
And answers not at all.

CRESTILLOMEEM

A melody ecstatic! and—thy words,
Although so meaningless, seem something more—
A vague and shadowy something, eerie-like,
That maketh one to shiver over-chilled
With curious, creeping sweetnesses of pain
And catching breaths that flutter tremulous
With sighs that dry the throat out icily.—
But save thy music! Come! that I may make
Thee ready for thy royal auditor. [*Exeunt*]

END ACT I

ACT II

SCENE I. *A garden of* KRUNG'S *Palace, screened from the moon with netted glenk-vines and blooming zhoomer-boughs, all glimmeringly lighted with star-flakes. An arbor, near which is a table spread with a repast—two seats, drawn either side. A playing fountain, at marge of which* AMPHINE *sits thrumming a trentoraine.*

AMPHINE [*Improvising*]

Ah, help me! but her face and brow
Are lovelier than lilies are
Beneath the light of moon and star
That smile as they are smiling now—
White lilies in a pallid swoon
Of sweetest white beneath the moon—
White lilies in a flood of bright
Pure lucidness of liquid light
Cascading down some plenilune
When all the azure overhead

Blooms like a dazzling daisy-bed.—
So luminous her face and brow,
The luster of their glory, shed
In memory, even, blinds me now.

[*Plaintively addressing instrument*]

O warbling strand of silver, where, O where
Hast thou unraveled that sweet voice of thine
And left its silken murmurs quavering
In limp thrills of delight? O golden wire,
Where hast thou spilled thy precious twinkerings?—
What thirsty ear hath drained thy melody,
And left me but a wild, delirious drop
To tincture all my soul with vain desire?

[*Improvising*]

Her face—her brow—her hair unfurled!—
And O the oval chin below,
Carved, like a cunning cameo,
With one exquisite dimple, swirled
With swimming shine and shade, and whirled
The daintiest vortex poets know—
The sweetest whirlpool ever twirled
By Cupid's finger-tip,—and so,
The deadliest maelstrom in the world.

[*Pauses—Enter unperceived,* DWAINIE, *behind, in upper bower*]

AMPHINE [*Again addressing instrument*]

O Trentoraine! how like an emptièd vase
Thou art—whose clustering blooms of song have
drooped
And faded, one by one, and fallen away
And left to me but dry and tuneless stems
And crisp and withered tendrils of a voice
Whose thrilling tone, now like a throttled sound,
Lies stifled, faint, and gasping all in vain
For utterance.

[*Again improvising*]

And O mad wars of blinding blurs
And flashings of lance-blades of light,
Whet glitteringly athwart the sight
That dares confront those eyes of hers!
Let any dewdrop soak the hue
Of any violet through and through,
And then be colorless and dull,
Compared with eyes so beautiful!
I swear ye that her eyes be bright
As noonday, yet as dark as night—
As bright as be the burnished bars
Of rainbows set in sunny skies,
And yet as deep and dark, her eyes,
And lustrous black as blown-out stars.

[*Pauses*—DWAINIE *still unperceived, radiantly smiling and wafting kisses down from trellis-window above*]

AMPHINE [*Again to instrument*]

O empty husk of song!
If deep within my heart the music thou
Hast stored away might find an issuance,
A fount of limpid laughter would leap up
And gurgle from my lips, and all the winds
Would revel with it, riotous with joy;
And Dwainie, in her beauty, would lean o'er
The battlements of night, and, like the moon,
The glory of her face would light the world—
For I would sing of love.

DWAINIE

And she would hear,—
And, reaching overhead among the stars,
Would scatter them like daisies at thy feet.

AMPHINE

O voice, where art thou floating on the air?—
O Seraph-soul, where art thou hovering?

DWAINIE

I hover in the zephyr of thy sighs,
And tremble lest thy love for me shall fail
To buoy me thus forever on the breath
Of such a dream as Heaven envies.

AMPHINE

Ah!

[*Turning, discovers* DWAINIE—*she still feigning invisibility, while he, with lifted eyes and wistful gaze, preludes with instrument — then sings.*]

Linger, my Dwainie! Dwainie, lily-fair,
Stay yet thy step upon the casement-stair—
Poised be thy slipper-tip as is the tine
Of some still star.—Ah, Dwainie—Dwainie mine,
Yet linger—linger there!

Thy face, O Dwainie, lily-pure and fair,
Gleams i' the dusk, as in thy dusky hair
The moony zhoomer glimmers, or the shine
Of thy swift smile.—Ah, Dwainie—Dwainie mine,
Yet linger—linger there!

With lifted wrist, whereround the laughing air
Hath blown a mist of lawn and clasped it there,
Waft finger-thipt adieus that spray the wine
Of thy waste kisses toward me, Dwainie mine—
Yet linger—linger there!

What unloosed splendor is there may compare
With thy hand's unfurled glory, anywhere?
What glint of dazzling dew or jewel fine

May mate thine eyes?—Ah, Dwainie—Dwainie
mine!
Yet linger—linger there!

My soul confronts thee: On thy brow and hair
It lays its tenderness like palms of prayer—
It touches sacredly those lips of thine
And swoons across thy spirit, Dwainie mine,
The while thou lingerest there.

[*Drops trentoraine, and, with open arms, gazes yearningly on* DWAINIE]

DWAINIE [*Raptly*]

Thy words do wing my being dovewise!

AMPHINE

Then,
Thou lovest!—O my homing dove, veer down
And nestle in the warm home of my breast!
So empty are mine arms, so full my heart,
The one must hold thee, or the other burst.

DWAINIE [*Throwing herself in his embrace*]

Æo's own hand methinks hath flung me here:
O hold me that He may not pluck me back!

AMPHINE

So closely will I hold thee that not e'en
The hand of death shall separate us.

DWAINIE

So
May sweet death find us, then, that, woven thus
In the corolla of a ripe caress,
We may drop lightly, like twin plustre-buds,
On Heaven's star-strewn lawn.

AMPHINE

So do I pray.
But tell me, tender heart, an thou dost love,
Where hast thou loitered for so long?—for thou
Didst promise tryst here with me earlier by
Some several layodemes which I have told
Full chafingly against my finger-tips
Till the full complement, save three, are ranged
Thy pitiless accusers, claiming, each,
So many as their joinèd number be
Shalt thou so many times lift up thy lips
For mine's most lingering forgiveness.
So, save thee, O my Sweet! and rest thee, I
Have ordered merl and viands to be brought
For our refreshment here, where, thus alone,
I may sip words with thee as well as wine.
Why hast thou kept me so athirst?—Why, I
Am jealous of the flattered solitudes
In which thou walkest. [*They sit at table*]

DWAINIE

Nay, I will not tell,
Since, an I yielded, countless questions, like

In idlest worth, would waste our interview
In speculations vain.—Let this suffice:—
I stayed to talk with one whom, long ago,
I met and knew, and grew to love, forsooth,
In dreamy Wunkland.—Talked of mellow nights,
And long, long hours of golden olden times
When girlish happiness locked hands with me
And we went spinning round, with naked feet
In swaths of bruisèd roses ankle-deep;
When laughter rang unsilenced, unrebuked,
And prayers went unremembered, oozing clean
From the drowsed memory, as from the eyes
The pure, sweet mother-face that bent above
Glimmered and wavered, blurred, bent closer still
A timeless instant, like a shadowy flame,
Then flickered tremulously o'er the brow
And went out in a kiss.

AMPHINE [*Kissing her*]

Not like to *this!*
O blessèd lips whose kiss alone may be
Sweeter than their sweet speech! Speak on, and say
Of what else talked thou and thy friend?

DWAINIE

We talked
Of all the past, ah me! and all the friends
That now await my coming. And we talked
Of O so many things—so many things—
That I but blend them all with dreams of when,

With thy warm hand clasped close in this of mine,
We cross the floating bridge that soon again
Will span the all-unfathomable gulfs
Of nether air betwixt this isle of strife
And my most glorious realm of changeless peace,
Where summer night reigns ever and the moon
Hangs ever ripe and lush with radiance
Above a land where roses float on wings
And fan their fragrance out so lavishly
That Heaven hath hint of it, and oft therefrom
Sends down to us across the odorous seas
Strange argosies of interchanging bud
And blossom, spice and balm.—Sweet—sweet
Beyond all art and wit of uttering.

AMPHINE

O Empress of my listening Soul, speak on,
And tell me all of that rare land of thine!—
For even though I reigned a peerless king
Within mine own, methinks I could fling down
My scepter, signet, crown and royal might,
And so fare down the thornèd path of life
If at its dwindling end my feet might touch
Upon the shores of such a land as thou
Dost paint for me—*thy* realm! Tell on of it—
And tell me if thy sister-woman there
Is like to thee—Yet nay! for an thou didst,
These eyes would lose all speech of sight
And call not back to thine their utter love.
But tell me of thy brothers.—Are they great,

And can they grapple Æo's arguments
Beyond our skill? or wrest a purpose from
The pink side of the moon at Darsten-tide?
Or cipher out the problem of blind stars,
That ever still do safely grope their way
Among the thronging constellations?

DWAINIE

Ay!
Ay, they have leaped all earthland barriers
In mine own isle of wisdom-working Wunks:—
'Twas Wunkland's son that voyaged round the moon
And moored his bark within the molten bays
Of bubbling silver: And 'twas Wunkland's son
That talked with Mars—unbuckled Saturn's belt
And tightened it in squeezure of such facts
Therefrom as even *he* dare not disclose
In full till all his followers, as himself,
Have grown them wings, and gat them beaks and claws,
With plumage all bescienced to withstand
All tensest flames—glaze-throated, too, and lung'd
To swallow fiercest-spurted jets and cores
Of embered and unquenchable white heat:
'Twas Wunkland's son that alchemized the dews
And bred all colored grasses that he wist—
Divorced the airs and mists and caught the trick
Of azure-tinting earth as well as sky:

'Twas Wunkland's son that bent the rainbow straight
And walked it like a street, and so returned
To tell us it was made of hammered shine,
Inlaid with strips of selvage from the sun
And burnished with the rust of rotten stars:
'Twas Wunkland's son that comprehended first
All grosser things, and took our worlds apart
And oiled their works with theories that clicked
In glib articulation with the pulse
And palpitation of the systemed facts.—
And, circling ever round the farthest reach
Of the remotest welkin of all truths,
We stint not our investigations to
Our worlds only, but query still beyond.—
For now our goolores say, below these isles
A million million miles, are *other* worlds—
Not like to ours, but *round,* as bubbles are,
And, like them, ever reeling on through space,
And anchorless through all eternity;—
Not like to ours, for our isles, as they note,
Are living things that fly about at night,
And soar above and cling, throughout the day,
Like bats, beneath the bent sills of the skies:
And I myself have heard, at dawn of moon,
A liquid music filtered through my dreams,
As though 'twere myriads of sweet voices, pent
In some o'erhanging realm, had spilled themselves
In streams of melody that trickled through
The chinks and crannies of a crystal pave,

Until the wasted juice of harmony,
Slow-leaking o'er my senses, laved my soul
In ecstacy divine: And afferhaiks,
Who scour our coasts on missions for the King,
Declare our island's shape is like the zhibb's
When lolling in a trance upon the air
With open wings upslant and motionless.
O such a land it is—so all complete
In all wise inhabitants, and knowledge, lore,
Arts, sciences, perfected government
And kingly wisdom, worth and majesty—
And *Art*—ineffably above all else:—
The art of the *Romancer,*—fabulous
Beyond the miracles of strangest fact;
The art of *Poesy,*—the sanest soul
Is made mad with its uttering; the art
Of *Music,*—words may not e'en whimper what
The jewel-sounds of song yield to the sense;
And, last,—the art of *Knowing what to Know,*
And how to zoon straight toward it like a bee,
Draining or song or poem as it brims
And overruns with raciest spirit-dew.—
And, *after,*—chaos all to sense like thine,
Till there, translated, thou shalt know as I. . . .
So furnished forth in all things lovable
Is my Land-Wondrous—ay, and thine to be,—
O Amphine, love of mine, it lacks but thy
Sweet presence to make it a paradise!

[*Takes up trentoraine*]

And shall I tell thee of the home that waits
For thy glad coming, Amphine?—Listen, then!

CHANT-RECITATIVE

A palace veiled in a glimmering dusk;
  Warm breaths of a tropic air,
Drugged with the odorous marzhoo's musk
  And the sumptuous cyncotwaire—
Where the trembling hands of the lilwing's leaves
  The winds caress and fawn,
While the dreamy starlight idly weaves
  Designs for the damask lawn.

Densed in the depths of a dim eclipse
  Of palms, in a flowery space,
A fountain leaps from the marble lips
  Of a girl, with a golden vase
Held atip on a curving wrist,
  Drinking the drops that glance
Laughingly in the glittering mist
  Of her crystal utterance.

Archways looped o'er blooming walks
  That lead through gleaming halls;
And balconies where the word-bird talks
  To the tittering waterfalls:
And casements, gauzed with the filmy sheen
  Of a lace that sifts the sight
Through a ghost of bloom on the haunted screen
  That drips with the dews of light.

Weird, pale shapes of sculptured stone,—
With marble nymphs agaze
Ever in fonts of amber, sown
With seeds of gold and sprays
Of emerald mosses, ever drowned,
Where glimpses of shell and gem
Peer from the depths, as round and round
The nautilus nods at them.

Faces blurred in a mazy dance,
With a music, wild and sweet,
Spinning the threads of the mad romance
That tangles the waltzers' feet:
Twining arms, and warm, swift thrills
That pulse to the melody,
Till the soul of the dancer dips and fills
In the wells of ecstacy.

Eyes that melt in a quivering ore
Of love, and the molten kiss
Jetted forth of the hearts that pour
Their blood in the molds of bliss.—
Till, worn to a languor slumber-deep,
The soul of the dreamer lifts
A silken sail on the gulfs of sleep,
And into the darkness drifts.

[*The instrument falls from her hand*—AMPHINE, *in stress of passionate delight, embraces her.*]

AMPHINE

Thou art not all of earth, O angel one!
Nor do I far miswonder me an thou
Hast peered above the very walls of Heaven!
What hast thou seen there?—Didst on Æo bask
Thine eyes and clothe Him with new splendorings?
And strove He to fling back as bright a smile
As thine, the while He beckoned thee within?
And, tell me, didst thou meet an angel there
A-linger at the gates, nor entering
Till I, her brother, joined her?

DWAINIE

Why, hast thou
A sister dead?—Truth, I have heard of one
Long lost to thee—not dead?

AMPHINE

Of her I speak,—
And dead, although we know not certainly,
We moan us ever it must needs be death
Only could hold her from us such long term
Of changeless yearning for her glad return.
She strayed away from us long, long ago.—
O and our memories!—Her wondering eyes
That seemed as though they ever looked on things
We might not see—as haply so they did,—

For she went from us, all so suddenly—
So strangely vanished, leaving never trace
Of her outgoing, that I ofttimes think
Her rapt eyes fell along some certain path
Of special glory paven for her feet,
And fashioned of Æo's supreme desire
That she might bend her steps therein and so
Reach Him again, unseen of our mere eyes.
My sweet, sweet sister!—lost to brother—sire—
And, to *her* heart, one dearer than all else,—
Her *lover*—lost indeed!

DWAINIE

Nay, do not grieve
Thee thus, O loving heart! Thy sister yet
May come to thee in some glad way the Fates
Are fashioning the while thy tear-drops fall!
So calm thee, while I speak of thine own self.—
For I have listened to a whistling bird
That pipes of waiting danger. Didst thou note
No strange behavior of thy sire of late?

AMPHINE

Ay, he is silent, and he walks as one
In some fixed melancholy, or as one
Half waking.—Even his worshiped books seem
now
But things on shelves,

DWAINIE

And doth he counsel not
With thee in any wise pertaining to
His ailings, or of matters looking toward
His future purposes or his intents
Regarding thine own future fortunings
And his desires and interests therein?
What bearing hath he shown of late toward thee
By which thou might'st beframe some estimate
Of his mind's placid flow or turbulent?
And hath he not so spoken thee at times
Thou hast been 'wildered of his words, or grieved
Of his strange manner?

AMPHINE

Once he stayed me on
The palace-stair and whispered, "Lo, my son,
Thy young reign draweth nigh—prepare!"—So
passed
And vanished as a wraith, so wan he was!

DWAINIE

And didst thou ever reason on this thing,
Nor ask thyself what dims thy father's eye
And makes a brooding shadow of his form?

AMPHINE

Why, there's a household rumor that he dreams
Death fareth ever at his side, and soon

Shall signal him away.—But *Jucklet* saith
Crestillomeem hath said *the leeches* say
There is no cause for serious concern;
And thus am I assured 'tis nothing more
Than childish fancy of mine aging sire,—
And so, as now, I laugh, full reverently,
And marvel, as I mark his shuffling gait,
And his bestrangered air and murmurous lips,
As by he glideth to and fro, ha! ha!
Ho! ho!—I laugh me many, many times—
Mind, thou, 'tis *reverently* I laugh—ha! ha!—
And wonder, as he glideth ghostly-wise,
If ever *I* shall waver as I walk,
And stumble o'er my beard, and knit my brows,
And o'er the dull mosaics of the pave
Play chequers with mine eyes! Ha! ha!

DWAINIE [*Aside*]

How dare—
How dare I tell him? Yet I must—I must!

AMPHINE

Why, art *thou,* too, grown childish, that thou canst
Find thee waste pleasure talking to thyself
And staring frowningly with eyes whose smiles
I need so much?

DWAINIE

Nay, rather say, their tears,
Poor thoughtless Prince! [*Aside*] (My magic
even now

Forecasts his kingly sire's near happening
Of nameless hurt and ache and awful stress
Of agony supreme, when he shall stare
The stark truth in the face!)

AMPHINE

What meanest thou?

DWAINIE

What mean I but thy welfare? Why, I mean,
One hour agone, the Queen, thy mother—

AMPHINE

Nay,
Say only "Queen"!

DWAINIE

—The Queen, one hour agone—
As so I learned from source I need not say—
Sent message craving audience with the King
At noon to-night, within the Tower of Stars.—
Thou knowest, only brief space following
The time of her pent session thereso set
In secret with the King alone, *the Throne*
Is set, too, to convene; and that *the King*
Hath lent his seal unto a mandate that,
Should he withhold his presence there, the Queen
Shall be empowered to preside—to reign—

Solely endowed to work the royal will
In lieu of the good King. Now, therefore, I
Have been advised that she, the Queen, by craft
Connives to hold him absent purposely,
That she may claim the vacancy—for what
Covert design I know not, but I know
It augurs peril to you both, as to
The Throne's own perpetuity. [*Aside*] (Again
My magic gives me vision terrible:—
The Sorceress' legions balk mine own.—The King
Still hers, yet wavering. O save the King,
Thou Æo!—Render him to us!)

AMPHINE

I feel
Thou speakest truth: and yet how know'st thou this?

DWAINIE

Ask me not that; my lips are welded close.—
And, *more,*—since I have dared to speak, and thou
To listen,—Jucklet is accessory,
And even now is plotting for thy fall.
But, Passion of my Soul! think not of me,—
For nothing but sheer magic may avail
To work me harm;—but look thou to thyself!
For thou art blameless cause of all the hate
That rankleth in the bosom of the Queen.
So have thine eyes unslumbered ever, that
No step may steal behind thee—for in this

Unlooked-of way thine enemy will come:
This much I know, but for what fell intent
Dare not surmise.—*So look thou, night and day,*
That none may skulk upon thee in this wise
Of dastardly attack. [*Aside*] (Ha! Sorceress!
Thou palest, tossing wild and wantonly
The smothering golden tempest of thy hair.—
What! lying eyes! *ye* dare to utter *tears?*
Help! help! Yield us the King!)

AMPHINE

And thou, O sweet!
How art thou guarded and what shield is thine
Of safety?

DWAINIE

Fear not thou for me at all.—
Possessed am I of wondrous sorcery—
The gift of Holy Magi at my birth:—
Mine enemy must *front* me in assault
And must with mummery of speech assail,
And I will know him in first utterance—
And so may thus disarm him, though he be
A giant thrice in vasty form and force.
[*Singing heard*]
But, list! what wandering minstrel cometh here
In the young night?

VOICE [*In distance—singing*]

The drowsy eyes of the stars grow dim;
The wamboo roosts on the rainbow's rim,
And the moon is a ghost of shine:
The soothing song of the crule is done,
But the song of love is a soother one,
And the song of love is mine.
Then, wake! O wake!
For the sweet song's sake,
Nor let my heart
With the morning break!

AMPHINE

Some serenader! Hist!
What meaneth he so early, and what thus
Within the palace garden-close? Quick; here!
He neareth! Soh! Let us conceal ourselves
And mark his action, wholly unobserved.

[AMPHINE *and* DWAINIE *enter bower*]

VOICE [*Drawing nearer*]

The mist of the morning, chill and gray,
Wraps the night in a shroud of spray;
The sun is a crimson blot:
The moon fades fast, and the stars take wing;
The comet's tail is a fleeting thing—
But the tale of love is not.

Then, wake! O wake!
For the sweet song's sake,
Nor let my heart
With the morning break!

[*Enter* JUCKLET]

JUCKLET

Eex! what a sumptuous darkness is the Night—
How rich and deep and suave and velvety
Its lovely blackness to a soul like mine!
Ah, Night! thou densest of all mysteries—
Thou eeriest of unfathomable delights,
Whose soundless sheer inscrutability
Is fascination's own ethereal self,
Unseen, and yet embodied—palpable,—
An essence, yet a form of stableness
That stays me—weighs me, as a giant palm
Were laid on either shoulder.—Peace! I cease
Even to strive to grope one further pace,
But stand uncovered and with lifted face.
O but a glamour of inward light
Hath smitten the eyes of my soul to-night!
Groping here in the garden-land,
I feel my fancy's outheld hand
Touch the rim of a realm that seems
Like an isle of bloom in a sea of dreams:
I stand mazed, dazed and alone—alone!—
My heart beats on in an undertone,
And I lean and listen long, and long,

And I hold my breath as I hear again
The chords of a long-dead trentoraine
And the wraith of an old love-song.
Low to myself am I whispering:—
Glad am I, and the Night knows why—
Glad am I that the dream came by
And found me here as of old when I
Was a ruler and a king.

DWAINIE [*To Amphine*]

What gentle little monster is this dwarf—
Surely not Jucklet of the court?

AMPHINE [*Ironically*]

Ay, ay!
But he'll *ungentle* an thy woman's-heart
Yield him but space. Listen: he mouths again.

JUCKLET

It was an age ago—an age
Turned down in life like a folded page.—
See where the volume falls apart,
And the faded book-mark—'tis my heart,—
Nor mine alone, but another knit
So cunningly in the love of it
That you must look, with a shaking head,
Nor know the quick one from the dead.
Ah! what a broad and sea-like lawn

Is the field of love they bloom upon!—
Waves of its violet-velvet grass
Billowing, with the winds that pass,
And breaking in a snow-white foam
Of lily-crests on the shores of home.
Low to myself am I whispering:—
Glad am I, and the Night knows why—
Glad am I that the dream came by
And found me here as of old when I
Was a ruler and a king.

[*Abruptly breaking into impassioned vocal burst*]

SONG

Fold me away in your arms, O Night—
Night, my Night, with your rich black hair!—
Tumble it down till my yearning sight
And my unkissed lips are hidden quite
And my heart is havened there,—
Under that mystical dark despair—
Under your rich black hair.

Oft have I looked in your eyes, O Night—
Night, my Night, with your rich black hair!—
Looked in your eyes till my face waned white
And my heart laid hold of a mad delight
That moaned as I held it there
Under the deeps of that dark despair—
Under your rich black hair.

Just for a kiss of your mouth, O Night—
Night, my Night, with your rich black
hair!—
Lo! will I wait as a dead man might
Wait for the Judgment's dawning light,
With my lips in a frozen prayer—
Under this lovable dark despair—
Under your rich black hair.

[*With swift change to mood of utter gaiety*]

Ho! ho! what will my dainty mistress say
When I shall stand knee-deep in the wet grass
Beneath her lattice, and with upturned eyes
And tongue out-lolling like the clapper of
A bell, outpour her *that?* I wonder now
If she will not put up her finger thus,
And say, "Hist! heart of mine! the angels call
To thee!" Ho! ho! Or will her blushing face
Light up her dim boudoir and, from her glass,
Flare back to her a flame upsprouting from
The hot-cored socket of a soul whose light
She thought long since had guttered out?—Ho! ho!
Or, haply, will she chastely bend above—
A Parian phantomette, with head atip
And twinkling fingers dusting down the dews
That glitter on the tarapyzma-vines
That riot round her casement—gathering
Lush blooms to pelt me with while I below
All winkingly await the fragrant shower?
Ho! ho! how jolly is this thing of love!

But how much richer, rarer, jollier
Than all the loves is this rare love of mine!
Why, my sweet Princess doth not even dream
I *am* her lover,—for, to here confess,
I have a way of wooing all mine own,
And waste scant speech in creamy compliment
And courtesies all gaumed with winy words.—
In sooth, I do not woo at all—I *win!*
How is it now the old duet doth glide
Itself full ripplingly adown the grooves
Of its quaint melody?—And whoso, by
The *bye,* or by the *way,* or *for the nonce,*
Or, eke ye, *peradventure,* ever durst
Render a duet singly but myself?

[*Singing—with grotesque mimicry of two voices*]

JUCKLET'S OSTENSIBLE DUET

How is it you woo?—and now answer me true,—
  How is it you woo and you win?
Why, to answer you true,—the first thing that you
    do
  Is to simply, my dearest—begin.

But how can I begin to woo or to win
  When I don't know a Win from a Woo?
Why, cover your chin with your fan or your fin,
  And I'll introduce them to you.

But what if it drew from my parents a view
With my own in no manner akin?
No matter!—your view shall be first of the two,—
So I hasten to usher them in.

Nay, stay! Shall I grin at the Woo or the Win?
And what will he do if I *do?*
Why, the Woo will begin with "How pleasant it's been!"
And the Win with "Delighted with you!"

Then supposing he grew very dear to my view—
I'm speaking, you know, of the Win?
Why, then, you should do what he wanted you to,—
And now is the time to begin.

The time to begin? O then usher him in—
Let him say what he wants me to do.
He is here.—He's a twin of yourself,—I am "Win,"
And you are, my darling, my "Woo"!

[*Capering and courtesying to feigned audience*]

That song I call most sensible nonsense;
And if the fair and peerless Dwainie were
But here, with that sweet voice of hers, to take
The part of "Woo," I'd be the happiest "Win"
On this side of futurity! Ho! ho!

DWAINIE [*Aside to* AMPHINE]

What means he?

AMPHINE

Why, he means that throatless head
Of his needs further chucking down betwixt
His cloven shoulders!

[*Starting forward—Dwainie detaining him*]

DWAINIE

Nay, thou shalt not stir!
See! now the monster hath discovered our
Repast. Hold! Let us mark him further.

JUCKLET [*Archly eying viands*]

What!
A roasted wheffle and a toc-spiced whum,
Tricked with a larvey and a gherghgling's tail!—
And, sprit me! wine enough to swim them in!
Now I should like to put a question to
The *guests;* but as there *are* none, I direct
Mine interrogatory to the host. [*Bowing to vacancy*]
Am I behind time?—Then I can but trust
My tardy coming may be overlooked
In my most active effort to regain
A gracious tolerance by service now:—
Directing rapt attention to the fact
That I have brought mine appetite along,

I can but feel, ho! ho! that further words
Would be a waste of speech.

[*Sits at table—pours out wine, drinks and eats voraciously*]

—There was a time
When I was rather backward in my ways
In courtly company (as though, forsooth,
I felt not, from my very birth, the swish
Of royal blood along my veins, though bred
Amongst the treacled scullions and the thralls
I shot from, like a cork, in youthful years,
Into court favor by my wit's sheer stress
Of fomentation.—*Pah! the stench o' toil!*)
Ay, somehow, as I think, I've all outgrown
That coarse, nice age, wherein one makes a meal
Of two estardles and a fork of soup.
Hey! sanaloo! Lest my starved stomach stand
Awe-stricken and aghast, with mouth agape
Before the rich profusion of this feast,
I lubricate it with a glass of merl
And coax it on to more familiar terms
Of fellowship with those delectables.
[*Pours wine and holds up goblet with mock courtliness*]
Mine host!—Thou of the viewless presence and
Hush-haunted lip:—Thy most imperial,
Ethereal, and immaterial health!
Live till the sun dries up, and comb thy cares

With star-prongs till the comets fizzle out
And fade away and fail and are no more!
[*Drains and refills goblet*]
And, if thou wilt permit me to observe,—
The gleaming shaft of spirit in this wine
Goes whistling to its mark, and full and fair
Zipps to the target-center of my soul!
Why, now am I the veriest gentleman
That ever buttered woman with a smile,
And let her melt and run and drip and ooze
All over and around a wanton heart!
And if my mistress bent above me now,
In all my hideous deformity,
I think she would look over, as it were,
The hump upon my back, and so forget
The kinks and knuckles of my crooked legs,
In this enchanting smile, she needs must leap,
Love-dazzled, and fall faint and fluttering
Within these yawning, all-devouring arms
Of mine! Ho! ho! And yet Crestillomeem
Would have me blight my dainty Dwainie with
This feather from the Devil's wing!—But I
Am far too full of craft to spoil the eyes
That yet shall pour their love like nectar out
Into mine own,—and I am far too deep
For royal wit to wade my purposes.

DWAINIE [*To* AMPHINE]

What can he mean?

AMPHINE [*Chafing in suppressed frenzy*]

Ha! to rush forward and
Tear out his tongue and slap it in his face!

DWAINIE [*To* AMPHINE]

Nay, nay! Hist what he saith!

JUCKLET

How big a fool—
How all magnificent an idiot
Would I be to blight *her*—(my peerless one!—
My very soul's soul!) as Crestillomeem
Doth instigate me to, for *her* hate's sake—
And inward *jealousy,* as well, belike!—
Wouldst have my Dwainie blinded to my charms—
For charms, good sooth, were every several flaw
Of my malformèd outer-self, compared
With that his Handsomeness the Prince Amphine
Shalt change to at a breath of my puff'd cheek,
E'en were it weedy-bearded at the time
With such a stubble as a huntsman well
Might lose his spaniel in! Ho! ho! Ho! ho!
I fear me, O my coy Crestillomeem,
Thine ancient coquetry doth challenge still
Thine own vain admiration overmuch!
I to crush *her?*—when thou, as certainly,
Hast armed me to smite down the only bar
That lies betwixt her love and mine? Ho! ho!

Hey! but the revel I shall riot in
Above the beauteous Prince, instantuously
Made all abhorrent as a reptiled bulk!
Ho! ho! my princely wooer of the fair
Rare lady of mine own superior choice!
Pah! but my very 'maginings of him
Refinèd to that shamèd, sickening shape,
Do so beloathe me of him there be qualms
Expostulating in my forum now!
Ho! what unprincifying properties
Of medication hath her Majesty
Put in my tender charge! Ho! ho! Ho! ho!
Ah, Dwainie! sweetest sweet! what shock to
thee?—
I wonder when she sees the human toad
Squat at her feet and cock his filmy eyes
Upon her and croak love, if she will not
Call me to tweezer him with two long sticks
And toss him from her path.—O ho! Ho! ho!
Hell bend him o'er some blossom quick, that I
May have one brother in the flesh!

[*Nods drowsily*]

DWAINIE [*To* AMPHINE]

Ha! See!
He groweth drunken.—Soh! Bide yet a spell
And I will vex him with my sorcery:
Then shall we hence,—for lo, the node when all
Our sublest arts and strategies must needs

Be quickened into acts and swift results.
Now bide thou here, and in mute silence mark
The righteous penalty that hath accrued
Upon that dwarfèd monster.

[*She stands, still in concealment from the dwarf, her tense gaze fixed upon him as though in mute and painful act of incantation.*—JUCKLET *affected drowsily—yawns and mumbles incoherently—stretches, and gradually sinks at full length on the sward.*—DWAINIE *moves forward*—AMPHINE, *following, is about to set foot contemptuously on sleeper's breast, but is caught and held away by* DWAINIE, *who imperiously waves him back, and still, in pantomime, commanding, bids him turn and hide his face* —AMPHINE *obeying as though unable to do otherwise. Dwainie then unbinds her hair, and throwing it all forward covering her face and bending till it trails the ground, she lifts to the knee her dress, and so walks backward in a circle round the sleeping* JUCKLET, *crooning to herself an incoherent song. Then pausing, letting fall her gown, and rising to full stature, waves her hands above the sleeper's face, and runs to* AMPHINE, *who turns about and gazes on her with new wonderment.*]

DWAINIE [*To* AMPHINE]

Now shalt thou
Look on such scaith as thou hath never dreamed.

[*As she speaks, half averting her face as with melancholy apprehension, chorus of lugubrious voices heard chanting discordantly*]

VOICES

When the fat moon smiles,
And the comets kiss,
And the elves of Spirkland flit
The Whanghoo twunkers
A tune like this,
And the Nightmares champ the bit.

[*As chorus dies away, a comet, freighted with weird shapes, dips from the night and trails near* JUCKLET'S *sleeping figure, while with attendant goblin-forms, two* Nightmares, CREECH *and* GRITCHFANG, *alight.—The comet kisses, switches its tail and disappears, while the two goblins hover buzzingly over* JUCKLET, *who starts wide-eyed and stares fixedly at them, with horribly contorted features.*]

CREECH [*To* GRITCHFANG]

Buzz!
Buzz!
Buzz!
Buzz!
Flutter your wings like your grandmother does!
Tuck in your chin and wheel over and *whir-r-r*

Like a dickerbug fast in the web of the wuhrr!
Reel out your tongue, and untangle your toes
And rattle your claws o'er the bridge of his nose;
Tickle his ears with your feathers and fuzz,
And keep up a hum like your grandmother does!

[JUCKLET *moans and clutches at air convulsively*]

AMPHINE [*Shuddering*]

Most gruesome sight! See how the poor worm writhes!
How must he suffer!

DWAINIE

Ay, but good is meant—
A far voice sings it so.

GRITCHFANG [*To* CREECH]

Let me dive deep in his nostriline caves
And keep an eye out as to how he behaves:
Fasten him down while I put him to rack—
And don't let him flop from the flat of his back!
[*Shrinks to minute size, while goblin attendants pluck from shrubbery a great lily-shaped flower which they invert funnel-wise, with small end at sleeper's nostrils, hoisting* GRITCHFANG *in at top and jostling shape downward gradually*

from sight, and—removing flower,—voice of GRITCHFANG *continues gleefully from within sleeper's head*]

Ho! I have bored through the floor of his brains,
And set them all writhing with torturous pains;
And I shriek out the prayer, as I whistle and whiz,
I may be the nightmare that my grandmother is!
[*Reappears, through reversal of flower method, assuming former shape, crosses to* CREECH, *and, joining, the twain dance on sleeper's stomach in broken time to duo*]

Duo

Whing!
Whang!
So our ancestors sang!
And they guzzled hot blood and blew up with a *bang!*—
But they ever tenaciously clung to the rule
To only blow up in the hull of a fool—
To fizz and explode like a cast-iron toad
In the cavernous depths where his victuals were stowed—
When chances were ripest and thickest and best
To burst every buttonhole out of his vest!

[*They pause, float high above, and fusing together into a great square iron weight drop heavily on chest of sleeper, who moans piteously.*]

AMPHINE [*Hiding his face*]

Ah! take me hence!

[DWAINIE *leads him off, looking backward as she goes and waving her hands imploringly to* CREECH *and* GRITCHFANG, *reassuming former shapes, in ecstasies of insane delight*]

CREECH [*To* GRITCHFANG]

Zipp!
Zipp!
Zipp!
Zipp!
Sting his tongue raw and unravel his lip!
Grope, on the right, down his windpipe, and squeeze
His liver as dry as a petrified wheeze!
[GRITCHFANG—*as before—shrinks and disappears at sleeper's mouth*]
Throttle his heart till he's black in the face,
And bury it down in some desolate place
Where only remorse in pent agony lives
To dread the advice that your grandmother gives!

[*The sleeper struggles contortedly, while voice of* GRITCHFANG *calls from within*]

GRITCHFANG

Ho-ho! I have clambered the rungs of his ribs
And beriddled his lungs into tatters and dribs;

And I turn up the tube of his heart like a hose
And squirt all the blood to the end of his nose!
I stamp on his stomach and caper and prance,
With my tail tossing round like a boomerang-lance!
And thus may success ever crown my intent
To wander the ways that my grandmother went!

[*Reappears, falls hysterically in* CREECH'S *outstretched arms.—Then dance and duo.*]

DUO

Whing!
Whung!
So our ancestors sung!
And they snorted and pawed, and they hissed and they stung,—
Taking special terrific delight in their work
On the fools that they found in the lands of the Spirk.—
And each little grain of their powders of pain
They scraped up and pestled again and again—
Mixed in quadruple doses for gluttons and sots,
Till they strangled their dreams with gung-jibbrous knots!

[*The comet again trails past, upon which the* Nightmares *leap and disappear.* JUCKLET *staggers to his feet and glares frenziedly around—then starts for opposite exit of comet—is there suddenly confronted with fiend-faces in the air, bewhiskered with ragged purplish flames that*

flare audibly and huskily in abrupt alternating chill gasps and hot welterings of wind. He starts back from them, reels and falls prostrate, groveling terrifiedly in the dust, and chattering, with eerie music accompanying his broken utterance.]

JUCKLET

Æo! Æo! Æo!
Thou dost all things know—
    Waving all claims of mine to *dare* to pray,
Save that I needs *must*:—Lo,
    What *may* I pray for? Yea,
    I have not *any* way,
An *Thou* gainsayest me a tolerance so.—
    I dare not pray
        Forgiveness—too great
        My vast o'ertoppling weight
    Of sinning; nor can I
    Pray my
Poor soul unscourged to go.—
Frame *Thou* my prayer, Æo!

What may I pray for? Dare
I shape a prayer,
        In sooth,
    For any canceled joy
        Of my mad youth,
    Or any bliss my sin's stress did destroy?
What may I pray for—What?—

That the wild clusters of forget-me-not
And mignonette
And violet
Be out of childhood brought,
And in mine hard heart set
A-blooming now as then?—
With all their petals yet
Bediamonded with dews—
Their sweet, sweet scent let loose
Full sumptuously again!

What *may* I pray, Æo!
For the poor hutchèd cot
Where death sate squat
Midst my first memories?—Lo!
My mother's face—(they, whispering, told me so)—
That face!—so pinchedly
It blanched up, as they lifted me—
Its frozen eyelids would
Not part, nor could
Be ever wetted open with warm tears.
. . . Who hears
The prayers for all dead-mother-sakes, Æo!

Leastwise *one* mercy:—May
I not have leave to pray
All *self* to pass away—
Forgetful of all needs mine own—
Neglectful of all creeds;—alone,

Stand fronting Thy high throne and say:
To Thee,
O Infinite, I pray
Shield *Thou* mine enemy!

[*Music throughout supplication gradually softens and sweetens into utter gentleness, with scene slow-fading into densest night.*]

End Act II

ACT III

SCENE I. *Court of* KRUNG—*Royal* Ministers, Counselors, *etc., in session.* CRESTILLOMEEM, *in full blazonry of regal attire, presiding. She signals a* Herald *at her left, who steps forward.—Blare of trumpets, greeted with ominous murmurings within, blent with tumult from without.*

HERALD

Hist, ho! Ay, ay! Ay, ay!—Her Majesty,
The All-Glorious and Ever-Gracious Queen,
Crestillomeem, to her most loyal, leal
And right devoted subjects, greeting sends—
Proclaiming, in the absence of the King,
Her royal presence—

[*Voice of* Herald *fails abruptly—utterly.—A breathless hush falls sudden on the court.—A sense oppressive—ominous—affects the throng. Weird music heard of unseen instruments.*]

HERALD [*Huskily striving to be heard*]

Hist, ho! Ay, ay! Ay, ay!—Her Majesty,

The All-Glorious and Ever-Gracious Queen, Crestillomeem—

[*The* Queen *gasps, and clutches at* Herald, *mutely signing him to silence, her staring eyes fixed on a shadowy figure, mistily developing before her, into wraith-like form and likeness of The Tune-Fool,* Spraivoll. *The shape—evidently invisible and voiceless to all senses but the* Queen's—*wavers vaporishly to and fro before her, moaning and crooning in infinitely sweet-sad minor cadences a mystic song.*]

Wraith-Song of Spraivoll

I will not hear the dying word
Of any friend, nor stroke the wing
Of any little wounded bird.
. . . Love is the deadest thing!

I wist not if I see the smile
Of prince or wight, in court or lane.—
I only know that afterwhile
He will not smile again.

The summer blossom, at my feet,
Swims backward, drowning in the grass.—
I will not stay to name it sweet—
Sink out! and let me pass!

I have no mind to feel the touch
Of gentle hands on brow and hair.—
The lack of this once pained me much,
And so I have a care.

Dead weeds, and husky-rustling leaves
That beat the dead boughs where ye cling,
And old dead nests beneath the eaves—
Love is the deadest thing!

Ah! once I fared not all alone;
And once—no matter, rain or snow!—
The stars of summer ever shone—
Because I loved him so!

With always tremblings in his hands,
And always blushes unaware,
And always ripples down the strands
Of his long yellow hair.

I needs must weep a little space,
Remembering his laughing eyes
And curving lip, and lifted face
Of rapture and surprise.

O joy is dead in every part,
And life and hope; and so I sing:
In all the graveyard of my heart
Love is the deadest thing!

[*With dying away of song, apparition of* SPRAIVOLL *slowly vanishes.* CRESTILLOMEEM *turns dazedly to throng, and with labored effort strives to reassume imperious mien.—Signs for merl and tremulously drains goblet—sinks back in throne with feigned complacency, mutely waving* Herald *to proceed.*]

HERALD [*Mechanically*]

Hist, ho! Ay, ay! Ay, ay!—Her Majesty,
The All-Glorious and Ever-Gracious Queen,
Crestillomeem, to her most loyal, leal
And right devoted subjects, greeting sends—
Proclaiming, in the absence of the King,
Her royal presence, as by him empowered
To sit and occupy, maintain and hold,
And therefrom rule the Throne, in sovereign state,
And work the royal will—[*Confusion*] *Hist,* ho! Ay, ay!
Ay, ay!—And be it known, the King, in view
Of his approaching dissolution—

[*Sensation among* Counselors, *etc., within, and wild tumult without and cries of "Long live the* King!" *and "Treason!" "Intrigue!" "Sorcery!"* CRESTILLOMEEM, *in suppressed ire, waving silence, and* Herald *striving to be heard.*]

HERALD

Hist, ho! Ay, ay! Ay, ay!—The King, in view
Of his approaching dissolution, hath
Decreed this instrument—this royal scroll

[*Unrolling and displaying scroll*]

With royal seal thereunto set by Krung's
Most sacred act and sign—

[*General sensation within, and growing tumult without, with wrangling cries of "Plot!" "Treason!" "Conspiracy!" and "Down with the* Queen!" *"Down with the usurper!" "Down with the Sorceress!"*]

CRESTILLOMEEM [*Wildly*]

Who dares to cry
"Conspiracy!" Bring me the traitor-knave!

[*Growing confusion without—sound of rioting.—Voice, "Let me be taken! Let me be taken!" Enter* Guards, *dragging* JUCKLET *forward, wild-eyed and hysterical—the* Queen's *gaze fastened on him wonderingly.*]

CRESTILLOMEEM [*To* Guards]

Why bring ye Jucklet hither in this wise?

GUARD

O Queen, 'tis he who cries "Conspiracy!"
And who incites the mob without with cries
Of "Plot!" and "Treason!"

CRESTILLOMEEM [*Starting*]

Ha! Can this be true?
I'll not believe it!—Jucklet is my fool,
But not so vast a fool that he would tempt
His gracious Sovereign's ire. [*To* Guards] Let
him be freed!

[*Then to* JUCKLET, *with mock service*]

Stand hither, O my Fool!

JUCKLET [*To* Queen]

What! I, thy fool?
Ho! ho! *Thy* fool?—ho! ho!—Why, *thou* art
mine!

[*Confusion—cries of "Strike down the traitor!"* JUCKLET *wrenching himself from grasp of officers*]

Back, all of ye! I have not waded hell
That I should fear your puny enmity!
Here will I give ye proof of all I say!

[*Presses toward throne, wedging his opposers left and right*—CRESTILLOMEEM *sits as though stricken speechless—pallid, waving him back*—JUCKLET, *fairly fronting her, with folded arms* —*then to throng continues.*]

Lo! do I here defy her to lift up
Her voice and say that Jucklet speaks a lie.

[*At sign of* Queen, Officers, *unperceived by* JUCKLET, *close warily behind him.*]

And, further—I pronounce the document
That craven Herald there holds in his hand
A forgery—a trick—and dare the Queen,
Here in my listening presence, to command
Its further utterance!

CRESTILLOMEEM [*Wildly rising*]

Hold, hireling!—Fool!—
The Queen thou dost in thy mad boasts insult
Shall utter first thy doom!

[JUCKLET, *seized from behind by* Guards, *is hurled face upward on the dais at her feet, while a minion, with drawn sword pressed close against his breast, stands over him.*]

—Ere we proceed
With graver matters, let this demon-knave
Be sent back home to hell.

[*With awful stress of ire, form quivering, eyes glittering and features twitched and ashen*]

Give *me* the sword,—
The insult hath been mine—so even shall
The vengeance be!

[*As* CRESTILLOMEEM *seizes sword and bends forward to strike,* JUCKLET, *with superhuman effort, frees his hand, and, with a sudden motion and an incoherent muttering, flings object in his assailant's face,*—CRESTILLOMEEM *staggers backward, dropping sword, and, with arms tossed aloft, shrieks, totters and falls prone upon the pave. In confusion following* JUCKLET *mysteriously vanishes; and as the bewildered* Courtiers *lift the fallen* Queen, *a clear, piercing voice of thrilling sweetness is heard singing.*]

VOICE

The pride of noon must wither soon—
The dusk of death must fall;
Yet out of darkest night the moon
Shall blossom over all!

[*For an instant a dense cloud envelops empty throne —then gradually lifts, discovering therein* KRUNG *seated, in royal panoply and state, with* JUCKLET *in act of presenting scepter to him.— Blare of trumpets, and chorus of* Courtiers, Ministers, Heralds, *etc.*]

CHORUS

All hail! Long live the King!

KRUNG [*To throng, with grave salutation*]

Through Æo's own great providence, and
through
The intervention of an angel whom
I long had deemed forever lost to me,
Once more your favored Sovereign, do I greet
And tender you my blessing, O most good
And faith-abiding subjects of my realm!
In common, too, with your long-suffering King,
Have *ye* long suffered, blamelessly as he:
Now, therefore, know ye all what, until late,
He knew not of himself, and with him share
The rapturous assurance that is his,—
That, for all time to come, are we restored
To the old glory and most regal pride
And opulence and splendor of our realm.

[*Turning with pained features to the strangely stricken* Queen]

There have been, as ye needs must know,
strange spells
And wicked sorceries at work within
The very dais boundaries of the Throne.
Lo! then, behold your harrier and mine,
And with me grieve for the self-ruined Queen

Who grovels at my feet, blind, speechless, and
So stricken with a curse herself designed
Should light upon Hope's fairest minister.

[*Motions attendants, who lead away* CRESTILLOMEEM—*the* King *gazing after her, overmastered with stress of his emotions.—He leans heavily on throne, as though oblivious to all surroundings, and, shaping into speech his varying thought, as in a trance, speaks as though witless of both utterance and auditor.*]

I loved her.—Why? I never knew.—Perhaps
Because her face was fair; perhaps because
Her eyes were blue and wore a weary air;—
Perhaps . . . perhaps because her limpid face
Was eddied with a restless tide, wherein
The dimples found no place to anchor and
Abide: perhaps because her tresses beat
A froth of gold about her throat, and poured
In splendor to the feet that ever seemed
Afloat. Perhaps because of that wild way
Her sudden laughter overleapt propriety;
Or—who will say?—perhaps the way she wept.
Ho! have ye seen the swollen heart of summer
Tempest, o'er the plain, with throbs of thunder
Burst apart and drench the earth with rain? She
Wept like that.—And to recall, with one wild
glance
Of memory, our last love-parting—tears

And all. . . . It thrills and maddens me! And
yet
My dreams will hold her, flushed from lifted brow
To finger-tips, with passion's ripest kisses
Crushed and mangled on her lips. . . . O
woman! while
Your face was fair, and heart was pure, and lips
Were true, and hope as golden as your hair,
I should have strangled you!

[*As* KRUNG, *ceasing to speak, piteously lifts his face,* SPRAIVOLL *all suddenly appears, in space left vacant by the* Queen, *and, kneeling, kisses the* King's *hand.—He bends in tenderness, kissing her brow—then lifts and seats her at his side. Speaks then to throng.*]

Good Subjects—Lords:
Behold in this sweet woman here my child,
Whom, years agone, the cold, despicable
Crestillomeem—by baleful, wicked arts
And gruesome spells and fearsome witcheries—
Did spirit off to some strange otherland,
Where, happily, a Wunkland Princess found
Her, and undid the spell by sorcery
More potent—ay, *Divine,* since it works naught
But *good*—the gift of Æo, to right wrong.
This magic dower the Wunkland Princess hath
Enlisted in our restoration here,
In secret service, till this joyful hour
Of our complete deliverance. Even thus.—
I o, let the peerless Princess now appear!

[*He lifts scepter, and a gust of melody, divinely beautiful, sweeps through the court.—The star above the throne loosens and drops slowly downward, bursting like a bubble on the scepter-tip, and, issuing therefrom,* AMPHINE *and* DWAINIE, *hand in hand, kneel at the feet of* KRUNG, *who bends above them with his blessing, while* JUCKLET *capers wildly round the group.*]

JUCKLET

Ho! ho! but I could shriek for very joy!
And though my recent rival, fair Amphine,
Doth even now bend o'er a blossom, I,
Besprit me! have no lingering desire
To meddle with it, though with but one eye
I slept the while she backward walked around
Me in the garden.

[AMPHINE *dubiously smiles*—JUCKLET *blinks and leers—and* DWAINIE *bites her finger.*]

KRUNG

Peace! good Jucklet! Peace!
For this is not a time for any jest.—
Though the old order of our realm hath been
Restored, and though restored my very life—
Though I have found a daughter,—I have lost

A son—for Dwainie, with her sorcery,
Will, on the morrow, carry him away.
'Tis Æo's largess, as our love is His,
And our abiding trust and gratefulness.

CURTAIN

WHEN I DO MOCK

WHEN I do mock the blackness of the night
With my despair—outweep the very dews
And wash my wan cheeks stark of all delight,
Denying every counsel of dear use
In mine embittered state; with infinite
Perversity, mine eyes drink in no sight
Of pleasance that nor moon nor stars refuse
In silver largess and gold twinklings bright;—
I question me what mannered brain is mine
That it doth trick me of the very food
It panteth for—the very meat and wine
That yet should plump my starvèd soul with good
And comfortable plethora of ease,
That I might drowse away such rhymes as these.

THE HIGHEST GOOD

TO attain the highest good
Of true man and womanhood,
Simply do your honest best—
God with joy will do the rest.

EZRA HOUSE

[*These lines was writ, in ruther high sperits, jest at the close of what's called the Anti Bellum Days, and more to be a-foolin' than anything else,—though they is more er less facts in it. But some of the boys, at the time we was all a-singin' it, fer Ezry's benefit, to the old tune of "The Oak and the Ash and the Bonny Willer Tree," got it struck off in the weekly, without leave er lisence of mine; and so sence they's allus some of 'em left to rigg me about it yit, I might as well claim the thing right here and now, so here goes. I give it jest as it appeard, fixed up and grammatisized consider'ble, as the editer told me he took the liburty of doin', in that sturling old home paper* The Advance—*as sound a paper yit to-day and as stanch and abul as you'll find in a hunderd.*]

COME listen, good people, while a story I do tell,
Of the sad fate of one which I knew so passing well;
He enlisted at McCordsville, to battle in the South,
And protect his country's union; his name was Ezra House.

He was a young school-teacher, and educated high
In regards to Ray's arithmetic, and also Algebra:
He give good satisfaction, but at his country's call
He dropped his position, his Algebra and all.

"It's oh, I'm going to leave you, kind scholars," he said—
For he wrote a composition the last day and read;
And it brought many tears in the eyes of the school,
To say nothing of his sweetheart he was going to leave so soon.

"I have many recollections to take with me away,
Of the merry transpirations in the schoolroom so gay;
And of all that's past and gone I will never regret
I went to serve my country at the first of the outset!"

He was a good penman, and the lines that he wrote
On that sad occasion was too fine for me to quote,—
For I was there and heard it, and I ever will recall
It brought the happy tears to the eyes of us all.

And when he left, his sweetheart she fainted away.
And said she could never forget the sad day
When her lover so noble, and galliant and gay,
Said "Fare you well, my true love!" and went marching away.

But he hadn't been gone for more than two months,
When the sad news come—"he was in a skirmish once,
And a cruel Rebel ball had wounded him full sore
In the region of the chin, through the canteen he wore."

But his health recruited up, and his wounds they got well,
But whilst he was in battle at Bull Run or Malvern Hill,
The news come again, so sorrowful to hear—
"A sliver from a bombshell cut off his right ear."

But he stuck to the boys, and it's often he would write,
That "he wasn't afraid for his country to fight."
But oh, had he returned on a furlough, I believe
He would not, to-day, have such cause to grieve.

For in another battle—the name I never heard—
He was guarding the wagons when an accident occurred,—
A comrade who was under the influence of drink,
Shot him with a musket through the right cheek, I think.

But his dear life was spared; but it hadn't been for long,
Till a cruel Rebel colonel come riding along,
And struck him with his sword, as many do suppose,
For his cap-rim was cut off, and also his nose.

But Providence, who watches o'er the noble and the brave,
Snatched him once more from the jaws of the grave;

And just a little while before the close of the war,
He sent his picture home to his girl away so far.

And she fell into decline, and she wrote in reply,
"She had seen his face again and was ready to die";
And she wanted him to promise, when she was in
her tomb,
He would only visit that by the light of the moon.

But he never returned at the close of the war,
And the boys that got back said he hadn't the heart;
But he got a position in a powder-mill, and said
He hoped to meet the doom that his country denied.

THE VISION OF RABBI BEN ISAAC

FOR three score years my wandering feet have strayed
Along a path wherein no footprint lay
Of Him, who of the cross a guide-board made
To point me out the way.

With open eyes I dreamed that I was dead—
Dead to all outward semblance, though I lay
With some old scrap of reason in my head
That would not fade away.

And peering up in wonderment I saw
My floating spirit plume its wings elate,
Yet gazing upward with a look of awe,
It seemed to hesitate.

"Go on!" I called to it. "Leap into space,
And sweep a way to glory with thy wings!"
"Alas!" it answered back, with troubled face,
"They are such trembling things!"

And hovering above me, spread them wide,
And all their glossy plumage o'er my eyes
Shook out in downy splendor, crimson-dyed
With hues of Paradise.

"Nay, glorious things are they," I cried amazed,
And veiled my vision from their dazzling light—
"So, get thee gone—their maker must be praised"—
And upward through the night

It lifted like a meteor, and sailed
Across the gulf of darkness like a flame,
While down the smoldering wake behind it trailed
The ashes of my name.

It called to me—not larger than a flake
Of starlight did it glimmer through the gloom—
"Pray for me," fell the voice, "for Jesus' sake!
I see the heavens bloom."

And loathful to myself I whispered then,
As wholly from my gaze the glimmer went—
"O Lord, through Christ, receive my soul, Amen."
And like an instrument

Of music in some heavenly tumult tipped,
Outpouring the elixir of its voice,
Down-showering upon my senses dripped
The utterance, "Rejoice!

"God listens, for the angels at the door
  Are swarming out and in and out again,
And o'er and round about me evermore
  They sing 'Good will to men!'"

Then suddenly the voice in quaverings
  Fell wailingly—"Alas! for I alone
Of all the glorious throng have tarnished wings
  That Heaven will not own.

"The angel Truth has pityingly said
  That every plume impure Christ will condemn,
And that the stain self-righteousness is red
  As blood on all of them."

Then to my soul I cried aloud: "Return
  That I may bow my head in holier prayer,
And all the recompense of good I earn
  Shall blossom everywhere."

"Not so." It answered, as in some surprise—
  "The angel Faith has whispered 'Look above,'
And shading with her wings my dazzled eyes,
  Points out the angel Love,

"Who, weeping, bends above me, and her tears
  Baptize me, and her sister Mercy trips
Along the golden clouds, and Christ appears
  With sorrow on His lips"—

Then silence, and as one who vainly wars
With inner strife: "Come back to me!" I cried,
And pealing down a pathway of the stars
A ringing voice replied—

"Now is thy soul's probation so complete
It may but answer thee with one farewell";
And, filtered through the gloom, lo! at my feet
A snow-white feather fell.

DAN PAINE

OLD friend of mine, whose chiming name
Has been the burthen of a rhyme
Within my heart since first I came
To know thee in thy mellow prime:
With warm emotions in my breast
That can but coldly be expressed,
And hopes and wishes wild and vain,
I reach my hand to thee, Dan Paine.

In fancy, as I sit alone
In gloomy fellowship with care,
I hear again thy cheery tone,
And wheel for thee an easy chair;
And from my hand the pencil falls—
My book upon the carpet sprawls,
As eager soul and heart and brain
Leap up to welcome thee, Dan Paine.

A something gentle in thy mien,
A something tender in thy voice,
Has made my trouble so serene,
I can but weep, from very choice.

And even then my tears, I guess,
Hold more of sweet than bitterness,
And more of gleaming shine than rain,
Because of thy bright smile, Dan Paine.

The wrinkles that the years have spun
And tangled round thy tawny face,
Are kinked with laughter, every one,
And fashioned in a mirthful grace.
And though the twinkle of thine eyes
Is keen as frost when Summer dies,
It can not long as frost remain
While thy warm soul shines out, Dan Paine.

And so I drain a health to thee:—
May merry Joy and jolly Mirth
Like children clamber on thy knee,
And ride thee round the happy earth!
And when, at last, the hand of Fate
Shall lift the latch of Canaan's gate,
And usher me in thy domain,
Smile on me just as now, Dan Paine.

OLD HEC'S IDOLATRY

HEIGH-O! our jolly tilts at New World song!—
What was the poem indeed! and where the bard—
"Stabbing his ink-pot ever, not his heart,"
As Hector phrased it contumeliously,
Mouthing and munching, at the orchard-stile,
A water-cored rambo whose spirted juice
Glanced, sprayed and flecked the sunlight as he mouth'd
And muncht, and muncht and mouth'd. All loved the man!
"Our Hector" as his *Alma Mater* oozed
It into utterance—"Old Hec" said we
Who knew him, hide-and-tallow, hoof-and-horn!
So he: "O ay! my soul! our New World song—
The tweedle-deedles of our modern school—
A school of minnows,—not one gamy bass—
To hook the angler, not the angler him.
Here! all ye little fishes: tweedle-dee!
Soh! one—along the vasty stream of time—
Glints to the surface with a gasp,—and, lo,
A bubble! and he thinks, 'My eye!—see there,
Ye little fishes,—there's a song I've sung!'

Another gapes: another bubble; then
He thinks: 'Well, is it not a wondrous art
To breathe a great immortal poem like that!'
And then another—and another still—
And yet another,—till from brim to brim
The tide is postuled over with a pest
Of bubbles—bursting bubbles! Ay! O ay!"
So, bluff old Hec. And we, who knew his mood
Had ramped its worst—unless we roused it yet
To ire's horiffickest insanity
By some inane, unguarded reference
To "verse beragged in Hoosier dialect"—
(A strangely unforgotten coinage of
Old Hec's, long years agone)—we, so, forbore
A word, each glimpsing each, as down we sank,
Couched limply in the orchard's selvage, where—
The rambo finished and the soggy core
Zippt at a sapphire wasp with waist more slim
Than any slender lady's, of old wars,
Pent fasting for long sennights in tall towers
That overtop the undercringing seas—
With one accordant voice, the while he creased
His scroll of manuscript, we said, "Go on."
Then Hector thus:

AN IDYL OF THE KING

Erewhile, as Autumn, to King Arthur's court
Came Raelus, clamoring: "Lo, has our house
Been sacked and pillaged by a lawless band

Of robber knaves, led on by Alstanés,
The Night-Flower named, because of her fair face,
All like a lily gleaming in the dusk
Of her dark hair—and like a lily brimmed
With dewy eyes that drip their limpid smiles
Like poison out, for by them has been wro't
My elder brother's doom, as much I fear.
While three days gone was holden harvest-feast
At Lynion Castle—clinging like a gull
High up the gray cliffs of Caerleon—
Came, leaf-like lifted from the plain below
As by a twisted wind, a rustling pack
Of bandit pillagers, with Alstanés
Bright-fluttering like a red leaf in the front.
And ere we were aware of fell intent—
Not knowing whether it was friend or foe—
We found us in their toils, and all the house
In place of guests held only prisoners—
Save that the host, my brother, wro't upon
By the strange beauty of the robber queen,
Was left unfettered, but by silken threads
Of fine-spun flatteries and wanton smiles
Of the enchantress, till her villain thieves
Had rifled as they willed and signal given
To get to horse again. And so they went—
Their leader flinging backward, as she rode,
A kiss to my mad brother—mad since then,—
For from that sorry hour he but talked
Of Alstanés, and her rare beauty, and
Her purity—ay, even that he said

Was star-white, and should light his life with love
Or leave him groping blindly in its quest
Thro' all eternity. So, sighing, he
Went wandering about till set of sun,
Then got to horse, and bade us all farewell;
And with his glamoured eyes bent trancedly
Upon the tumbled sands that marked the way
The robber-woman went, he turned and chased
His long black shadow o'er the edge of night."

—So Raelus, all seemingly befret
With such concern as nipped his utterance
In scraps of speech: at which Sir Lancelot,
Lifting a slow smile to the King, and then
Turning his cool eye on the youth—"And you
Would track this siren-robber to her hold
And rout her rascal followers, and free
Your brother from the meshes of this queen
Of hearts—for there you doubtless think him?"
"Ay!"
Foamed Raelus, cheek flushed and eye aflame,—
"So even have I tracked, and found them, too,
And know their burrow, shrouded in a copse,
Where, faring in my brother's quest, I heard
The nicker of his horse, and followed on,
And found him tethered in a thicket wild,
As tangled in its tress of leaf and limb
As is a madman's hair; and down the path
That parted it and ran across a knoll
And dipped again, all suddenly I came

Upon a cave, wide-yawning 'neath a beard
Of tangled moss and vine, whence issuing
I heard, blown o'er my senses faint and clear
As whiffs of summer wind, my brother's voice
Lilting a love-song, with the burden tricked
With dainty warblings of a woman's tongue:
And even as I listening bent, I heard
Such peals of wanton merriment as made
My own heart flutter as a bird that beats
For freedom at the bars that prison it.
So turned I then and fled as one who flies
To save himself alone—forgetful all
Of that my dearer self—my brother.—O!"—
Breaking as sharply as the icy blade
That loosens from the eave to slice the air
And splinter into scales of flying frost—
"Thy help! Thy help! A dozen goodly knights—
Ay, even that, if so it be their hearts
Are hungry as my own to right the wrong!"

So Raelus. And Arthur graciously
Gave ear to him, and, patient, heard him thro',
And pitied him, and granted all he asked;
Then took his hand and held it, saying, "Strong
And ever stronger may its grasp be knit
About the sword that flashes in the cause
Of good."

Thus Raelus, on the morrow's front,
Trapped like a knight and shining like a star,
Pranced from the archway of the court, and led

His glittering lances down the gleaming road
That river-like ran winding till it slipped
Out of the palace view and spilled their shields
Like twinkling bubbles o'er the mountain brim.

Then happed it that as Raelus rode, his tongue
Kept even pace and cantered ever on
Right merrily. His brother, as he said,
Had such an idle soul within his breast—
Such shallowness of fancy for his heart
To drift about in—that he well believed
Its anchor would lay hold on any smile
The lees of womanhood might offer him.
As for himself, he loved his brother well,
Yet had far liefer see him stark and white
In marble death than that his veins should burn
With such vitality as spent its flame
So garishly it knew no steady blaze,
But ever wavered round as veered the wind
Of his conceit; for he had made his boast—
Tho' to his own shame did he speak of it—
That with a wink he could buy every smile
That virtue owned. So tattled Raelus
Till, heated with his theme, he lifted voice
And sang the song, "The Light of Woman's Eyes!"

"O bright is gleaming morn on mountain height;
And bright the moon, slipt from its sheath of
night,—
But brighter is the light of woman's eyes.

"And bright the dewdrop, trembling on the lip
Of some red rose, or lily petal-tip,
  Or lash of pink,—but brighter woman's eyes.

"Bright is the firefly's ever-drifting spark
That throbs its pulse of light out in the dark;
  And bright the stars,—but brighter woman's eyes.

"Bright morn or even; bright or moon or star,
And all the many twinkling lights that are,—
  O brighter than ye all are woman's eyes."

So Raelus sang.—And they who rode with him
Bewildered were, and even as he sang
Went straggling, twos and threes, and fell behind
To whisper wonderingly, "Is he a fool?"
And "Does he waver in his mind?" and "Does
The newness of adventure dazzle him?"
So spake they each to each, till far beyond,
With but one loathful knight in company,
They saw him quit the beaten track, and turn
Into the grassy margin of a wood.
And loitering, they fell in mocking jest
Of their strange leader! "See! why, see!" said
    one,—
"He needs no help to fight his hornets' nest,
But one brave knight to squire him!"—pointing on
To where fared on the two and disappeared.
"O ay!" said one, "belike he is some old
War-battered knight of long-forgotten age,
That, bursting from his chrysalis, the grave,

Comes back to show us tricks we never dreamed!"
"Or haply," said another, with a laugh,—
"He rides ahead to tell them that he comes
And shrive them ere his courage catches up."
And merry made they all, and each in turn
Filliped a witty pellet at his head:
Until, at last, their shadows shrunk away
And shortened 'neath them and the hour was noon,
They flung them from their horses listlessly
Within the grassy margin of the wood
Where had passed Raelus an hour agone:
And, hungered, spied a rustic; and they sent
To have them such refreshment as might be
Found at the nearest farm,—where, as it chanced,
Was had most wholesome meat, and milk, and
bread;
And honey, too, celled in its fretted vase
Of gummy gold and dripping nectar-sweet
As dreamed-of kisses from the lips of love;
Wine, too, was broughten, rosy as the dawn
That ushers in the morning of the heart;
And tawny, mellow pear, whose golden ore
Fell molten on the tongue and oozed away
In creamy and delicious nothingness;
And netted melon, musky as the breath
Of breezes blown from out the Orient;
And purple clusterings of plum and grape,
Blurred with a dust dissolving at the touch
Like flakes the fairies had snowed over them.
And as the idlers basked, with toast and song
And graceful dalliance and wanton jest,

A sound of trampling hooves and jingling reins
Brake sudden, stilled them; and from out a dim
Path leading from the bosky wood there came
A troop of mounted damsels, nigh a score,
Led by a queenly girl, in crimson clad,
With lissome figure lithe and willowy,
And face as fair and sweet and pure withal
As might a maiden lily-blossom be
Ere it has learned the sin of perfect bloom:
Her hair, blown backward like a silken scarf
And fondled by the sun, was glossier
And bluer black than any raven's wing.
"And O!" she laughed, not knowing she was heard
By any but her fellows: "Men are fools!"
Then drawing rein, and wheeling suddenly,
Her charger mincing backward,—"Raelus—
My Raelus is greater than ye all,
Since he is such a fool that he forgets
He is a man, and lets his tongue of love
Run babbling like a silly child's; and, pah!
I puff him to the winds like thistle-down!"
And, wheeling as she spake, found staring up,
Wide-eyed and wondering, a group of knights,
Half lifted, as their elbows propped their heads,
Half lying; and one, smirker than the rest,
Stood bowing very low, with upturned eyes
Lit with a twinkling smile: "Fair lady—and
Most gracious gentlewomen"—seeing that
The others drew them back as tho' abashed
And veiled their faces with all modesty,
Tho' she, their leader, showed not any qualm,—

"Since all unwittingly we overheard
Your latest speech, and since we know at last
'All men are fools,' right glad indeed am I
That such a nest of us remains for you
To vanquish with those eyes." Then, serious,
That she nor smiled nor winced, nor anything—
"Your pardon will be to me as a shower
Of gracious rain unto a panting drouth."
So bowed in humblest reverence; at which
The damsel, turning to her followers,
Laughed musically,—"See! he proves my words!"
Whereat the others joined with inward glee
Her pealing mirth; and in the merriment
The knights chimed, too, and he, the vanquished one,
Till all the wood rang as at hunting-tide
When bugle-rumors float about the air
And echoes leap and revel in delight.
Then spake the vanquished knight, with mental eye
Sweeping the vantage-ground that chance had
gained,—
"Your further pardon, lady: Since the name
Of Raelus fell from those lips of thine,
We fain would know of him. He led us here,
And as he went the way wherefrom your path
Emerges, haply you may tell us where
He may be found?"
"What! Raelus?" she cried,—
"He comes with you?—The brave Sir Raelus?—
That mighty champion?—that gallant knight?—
That peerless wonder of all nobleness?
Then proud am I to greet ye, knowing that;

And, certes, had I known of it ere now,
Then had I proffered you more courtesy
And told you, ere the asking, that he bides
The coming of his friends a league from this,
Hard by a reedy mere, where in high tune
We left him singing, nigh an hour agone."
Then, as she lightly wheeled her horse about
And signal gave to her companions
To follow, gaily cried: "Tell Raelus
His cousin sends to him her sad farewells
And fond regrets, and kisses many as
His valorous deeds are numbered in her heart."
And with "Fair morrow to ye, gentle knights!"
Her steed's hooves struck the highway at a bound;
And dimly thro' the dust they saw her lead
Her fluttering cavalcade as recklessly
As might a queen of Araby, fleet-horsed,
Skim o'er the level sands of Syria.
So vanished. And the knights with one accord
Put foot in stirrup, and, with puzzled minds
And many-channeled marvelings, filed in
The woody path, and fared them on and on
Thro' denser glooms, and ways more intricate;
Till, mystified at last and wholly lost,
They made full halt, and would have turned them back
But that a sudden voice brake on their ears
All piteous and wailing, as distressed:
And, following these cries, they sharply came
Upon an open road that circled round
A reedy flat and sodden tract of sedge,

Moated with stagnant water, crusted thick
With slimy moss, wherein were wriggling things
Entangled, and blind bubbles bulging up
And bursting where from middle way upshot
A tree-trunk, with its knarled and warty hands
As tho' upheld to clutch at sliding snakes
Or nip the wet wings of the dragon-fly.
Here gazing, lo! they saw their comrade, he
That had gone on with Raelus; and he
Was tugging to fling back into its place
A heavy log that once had spanned the pool
And made a footway to the sedgy flat
Whence came the bitter wailing cries they heard.
Then hastened they to join him in his task;
But, panting, as they asked of Raelus,
All winded with his work, yet jollier
Than meadow-lark at morn, he sent his voice
In such a twittering of merriment,
The wail of sorrow died and laughter strewed
Its grave with melody.
"O Raelus!
Rare Raelus!" he cried and clapped his hands,
And even in the weeds that edged the pool
Fell wrestling with his mirth.—"Why, Raelus,"
He said, when he at last could speak again,
"Drew magnet-like—you know that talk of his,—
And so, adhesive, did I cling and cling
Until I found us in your far advance,
And, hidden in the wood, I stayed to say
'Twas better we should bide your coming. 'No.'
Then on again; and still a second time—

'Shall we not bide their coming?' 'No!' he said;
And on again, until the third; and 'No—
We'll push a little further.' As we did;
And, sudden, came upon an open glade—
There to the northward,—by a thicket bound:
Then he dismounted, giving me his rein,
And, charging me to keep myself concealed,
And if he were not back a certain time
To ride for you and search where he had gone,
He crossed the opening and passed from sight
Within the thicket. I was curious:
And so, dismounting, tethered our two steeds
And followed him; and, creeping warily,
Came on him where—unseen of him—I saw
Him pause before the cave himself described
Before us yesternoon. And here he put
His fingers to his lips and gave a call
Bird-like and quavering: at which a face,
As radiant as summer sun at morn,
Parted the viny curtains of the cave;
And then, a moment later, came in view
A woman even fairer than my sight
Might understand. 'What! dare you come again?'
As, lifting up her eyes all flashingly,
She scorched him with a look of hate.—'Begone!
Or have you—traitor, villain, knave, and cur,—
Bro't minions of the law to carry out
The vengeance of your whimpering jealousy?'
Then Raelus, all cowering before
Her queenly anger, faltered: 'Hear me yet;
I do not threaten. But your love—your love!—

O give me that. I know you pure as dew:
Your love! Your love!—The smile that has gone
out
And left my soul a midnight of despair!—
Your love or life! For I have even now
Your stronghold girt about with certain doom
If you but waver in your choice.—Your love!'
At which, as quick as tho't, leapt on him there
A strong man from the covert of the gloom;
And others, like to him, from here and there
Came skurrying. I, turning, would have fled,
But found myself as suddenly beset
And tied and tumbled there with Raelus.
And him they haltered by his squirming heels
Until he did confess such villainy
As made me wonder if his wits were sound—
Confessed himself a renegade—a thief—
Ay, even one of them, save that he knew
Not that nice honor even thieves may claim
Among themselves.—And so ran on thro' such
A catalogue of littlenesses, I
For deafest shame had even stopped my ears
But that my wrists were lockt. And when he came
To his confession of his lie at court,
By which was gained our knightly sympathy
And valiant service on this fools' crusade,
I seemed to feel the redness of my blush
Soak thro' my very soul. There I brake in:
'Fair lady and most gallant,—to my shame
Do I admit we have been duped by such
An ingrate as this bundled lump of flesh

That I am helpless to rise up and spurn:
Unbind me, and I promise such amends
As knightly hands may deign to wreak upon
A thing so vile as he.' Then, laughing, she:
'First tell me, by your honor, where await
Your knightly brothers and my enemies.'
To which I answered, truthfully, I knew
Not where you lingered, but not close at hand
I was assured. Then all abrupt, she turned:
'Get every one within! We ride at once!'
And scarce a dozen minutes ere they came
Outpouring from the cave in such a guise
As made me smile from very wonderment.—
From head to heel in woman's dress they came,
Clad richly, too, and trapped and tricked withal
As maidenly, but in the face and hand,
As ever damsels flock at holiday.
Then were their chargers bro't, caparisoned
In keeping; and they mounted, lifting us,
Still bounden, with much jest and mockery
Of soft caress and wanton blandishments,
As tho' they were of sex their dress declared.
And so they carried us until they came
Upon the road there as it nicks the copse;
And so drew rein, dismounted, leaving some
To guard their horses; hurried us across
This footway to the middle of the flat.
Here Raelus was bounden to a tree,
Stript to the waist; my fetters cut, and then
A long, keen switch put in my hand, and 'Strike!
Strike as all duty bids you!' said the queen.

And so I did, with right good will at first;
Till, softened as I heard the wretch's prayers
Of anguish, I at last withheld my hand.
'What! tiring?' chirpt the queen: 'Give me the stick!'
And swish, and swish, and mercy how it rained!
Then all the others, forming circlewise,
Danced round and round the howling wretch, and jeered
And japed at him, and mocked and scoffed at him,
And spat upon him. And I turned away
And hid my face; then raised it pleadingly:
Nor would they listen my appeal for him;
But left him so, and thonged and took me back
Across the mere, and drew the bridge, that none
Might go to him, and carried me with them
Far on their way, and freed me once again;
And back I turned, tho' loath, to succor him."
And even as he ceased they heard the wail
Break out anew, and crossed without a word,
And Raelus they found, and without word
They loosed him. And he brake away and ran
As runs a lie the truth is hard upon.

Thus did it fare with Raelus. And they
Who knew of it said naught at court of it,
Nor from that day spake ever of him once,
Nor heard of him again, nor cared to hear.

A MOTHER-SONG

MOTHER, O mother! forever I cry for you,
Sing the old song I may never forget;
Even in slumber I murmur and sigh for you.—
Mother, O mother,
Sing low, "Little brother,
Sleep, for thy mother bends over thee yet!"

Mother, O mother! the years are so lonely,
Filled but with weariness, doubt and regret!
Can't you come back to me—for to-night only,
Mother, my mother,
And sing, "Little brother,
Sleep, for thy mother bends over thee yet!"

Mother, O mother! of old I had never
One wish denied me, nor trouble to fret;
Now—must I cry out all vainly forever,—
Mother, sweet mother,
O sing, "Little brother,
Sleep, for thy mother bends over thee yet!"

Mother, O mother! must longing and sorrow
Leave me in darkness, with eyes ever wet,
And never the hope of a meeting to-morrow?
Answer me, mother,
And sing, "Little brother,
Sleep, for thy mother bends over thee yet!"

THE LOST PATH

ALONE they walked—their fingers knit together,
And swaying listlessly as might a swing
Wherein Dan Cupid dangled in the weather
Of some sun-flooded afternoon of Spring.

Within the clover-fields the tickled cricket
Laughed lightly as they loitered down the lane,
And from the covert of the hazel-thicket
The squirrel peeped and laughed at them again.

The bumblebee that tipped the lily-vases
Along the roadside in the shadows dim,
Went following the blossoms of their faces
As though their sweets must needs be shared with him.

Between the pasture bars the wondering cattle
Stared wistfully, and from their mellow bells
Shook out a welcoming whose dreamy rattle
Fell swooningly away in faint farewells.

And though at last the gloom of night fell o'er them,
And folded all the landscape from their eyes,
They only knew the dusky path before them
Was leading safely on to Paradise.

MY BRIDE THAT IS TO BE

O SOUL of mine, look out and see
My bride, my bride that is to be!—
Reach out with mad, impatient hands,
And draw aside futurity
As one might draw a veil aside—
And so unveil her where she stands
Madonna-like and glorified—
The queen of undiscovered lands
Of love, to where she beckons me—
My bride, my bride that is to be.

The shadow of a willow-tree
That wavers on a garden-wall
In summer-time may never fall
In attitude as gracefully
As my fair bride that is to be;—
Nor ever Autumn's leaves of brown
As lightly flutter to the lawn
As fall her fairy-feet upon

The path of love she loiters down.—
O'er drops of dew she walks, and yet
Not one may stain her sandal wet—
Ay, she might *dance* upon the way
Nor crush a single drop to spray,
So airy-like she seems to me,—
My bride, my bride that is to be.

I know not if her eyes are light
As summer skies or dark as night,—
I only know that they are dim
With mystery: In vain I peer
To make their hidden meaning clear,
While o'er their surface, like a tear
That ripples to the silken brim,
A look of longing seems to swim
All worn and weary-like to me;
And then, as suddenly, my sight
Is blinded with a smile so bright,
Through folded lids I still may see
My bride, my bride that is to be.

Her face is like a night of June
Upon whose brow the crescent-moon
Hangs pendent in a diadem
Of stars, with envy lighting them.—
And, like a wild cascade, her hair
Floods neck and shoulder, arm and wrist,
Till only through a gleaming mist
I seem to see a Siren there,

With lips of love and melody
  And open arms and heaving breast
  Wherein I fling myself to rest,
The while my heart cries hopelessly
For my fair bride that is to be.

. . . . . .

Nay, foolish heart and blinded eyes!
My bride hath need of no disguise.—
  But, rather, let her come to me
In such a form as bent above
  My pillow when, in infancy,
I knew not anything but love.—
O let her come from out the lands
  Of Womanhood—not fairy isles,—
And let her come with Woman's hands
  And Woman's eyes of tears and smiles,—
With Woman's hopefulness and grace
Of patience lighting up her face:
And let her diadem be wrought
Of kindly deed and prayerful thought,
That ever over all distress
May beam the light of cheerfulness.—
And let her feet be brave to fare
The labyrinths of doubt and care,
That, following, my own may find
The path to Heaven God designed.—
O let her come like this to me—
My bride—my bride that is to be.

LULLABY

THE maple strews the embers of its leaves
O'er the laggard swallows nestled 'neath the eaves;
And the moody cricket falters in his cry—Baby-bye!—
And the lid of night is falling o'er the sky—Baby-bye!—
The lid of night is falling o'er the sky!

The rose is lying pallid, and the cup
Of the frosted calla-lily folded up;
And the breezes through the garden sob and sigh—Baby-bye!—
O'er the sleeping blooms of Summer where they lie—Baby-bye!—
O'er the sleeping blooms of summer where they lie!

Yet, Baby—O my Baby, for your sake
This heart of mine is ever wide awake,
And my love may never droop a drowsy eye—Baby-bye!—
Till your own are wet above me when I die—Baby-bye!—
Till your own are wet above me when I die.

THE ROMAUNT OF KING MORDAMEER

HO! did ye hear of Mordameer,
The King of Slumberland!
A lotus-crown upon his brow—
A poppy in his hand,
And all the elves that people dreams
To bow at his command.

His throne is wrought of blackest night,
Enriched with rare designs
Wherein the blazing comet runs
And writhes and wreaths and twines
About a crescent angel-face
That ever smiling shines.

The dais is of woven rays
Of starlight fringed with shade,
And jeweled o'er with gems of dew,
And dyed and interlaid
With every gleaming tint and hue
Of which the flowers are made.

And when the day has died away
  In darkness o'er the land,
The King bends down his dusky face
  And takes the sleeper's hand,
And lightly o'er his folded eyes
  He waves his magic wand.

And lo! within his princely home,
  Upon his downy bed,
With soft and silken coverlets
  And curtains round him spread,
The rich man rolls in troubled sleep,
  And moans in restless dread:

His eyes are closed, yet Mordameer
  May see their stony stare
As plainly fixed in agony
  As though the orbs were bare
And glaring at the wizard throng
  That fills the empty air:—

A thousand shapes, with phantom japes,
  Dance o'er the sleeper's sight,—
With fingers bony-like and lean,
  And faces pinched and white,
And withered cheeks, and sunken eyes
  With ever-ravening sight.

And such the dreams that Mordameer
  Brings to the child of Pride,—
The worn and wasted forms that he

Hath stinted and denied—
Of those who filled his coffers up
And empty-handed died.

And then again he waves his wand:
And from his lair of straw
The felon, with his fettered limbs,
Starts up with fear and awe,
And stares with starting eyes upon
A vision of the law:

A grim procession passes by,
The while he glares in fear—
With faces, from a wanton's smile
Down to a demon's leer,—
The woman marching at the front,
The hangman at the rear.

All ways are clear to Mordameer:
The ocean knows his tread;
His feet are free on land or sea:—
Above the sailor's head
He hangs a dream of home, and bends
Above his cottage-bed:

And, nestled in the mother's arms,
A child, surpassing fair,
In slumber lies, its tiny hands
Entangled in her hair,
And round its face a smile that moves
Its lips as though in prayer.

And lo! the good king feasts its eyes
With fruits from foreign shores,
And pink-lipped shells that ever mock
The ocean as it roars;
And in the mother's arms he folds
The form that she adores.

Through all the hovels of the poor
He steals with noiseless tread,
And presses kisses o'er and o'er
Where sorrow's tears are shed,
Till old caresses live once more
That are forever dead.

Above the soldier in his tent
Are glorious battles fought;
And o'er the prince's velvet couch,
And o'er the peasant's cot,
And o'er the pallet of disease
His wondrous spells are wrought.

He bends him o'er the artist's cot,
And fills his dazzled mind
With airy forms that float about
Like clouds in summer wind,
O'er landscapes that the angels wrought
And God Himself designed.

And drifting through the poet's dreams
The seraph trails her wings,
And fills the chancels of his soul

With heavenly whisperings,
Till, swooning with delight, he hears
The song he never sings.

He walks the wide world's every way,
This monarch grand and grim;
All paths that reach the human heart,
However faint and dim,
He journeys, for the darkest night
Is light as day to him.

And thus the lordly Mordameer
Rules o'er his mystic realm,
With gems from out the star's red core
To light his diadem,
And kings and emperors to kneel
And kiss his garment's hem.

For once, upon a night of dreams,
Adown the aisles of space
I strayed so far that I forgot
Mine own abiding-place,
And wandered into Slumberland,
And met him face to face.

DEARTH

I HOLD your trembling hand to-night—and yet
I may not know what wealth of bliss is mine,
My heart is such a curious design
Of trust and jealousy! Your eyes are wet—
So must I think they jewel some regret,—
And lo, the loving arms that round me twine
Cling only as the tendrils of a vine
Whose fruit has long been gathered: I forget,
While crimson clusters of your kisses press
Their wine out on my lips, my royal fare
Of rapture, since blind fancy needs must guess
They once poured out their sweetness otherwhere,
With fuller flavoring of happiness
Than e'en your broken sobs may now declare.

THE SONG I NEVER SING

AS when in dreams we sometimes hear
A melody so faint and fine
And musically sweet and clear,
It flavors all the atmosphere
With harmony divine,—
So, often in my waking dreams,
I hear a melody that seems
Like fairy voices whispering
To me the song I never sing.

Sometimes when brooding o'er the years
My lavish youth has thrown away—
When all the glowing past appears
But as a mirage that my tears
Have crumbled to decay,—
I thrill to find the ache and pain
Of my remorse is stilled again,
As, forward bent and listening,
I hear the song I never sing.

A murmuring of rhythmic words,
  Adrift on tunes whose currents flow
Melodious with the trill of birds,
And far-off lowing of the herds
  In lands of long ago;
    And every sound the truant loves
    Comes to me like the coo of doves
    When first in blooming fields of Spring
    I heard the song I never sing.

The echoes of old voices, wound
  In limpid streams of laughter where
The river Time runs bubble-crowned,
And giddy eddies ripple round
  The lilies growing there;
    Where roses, bending o'er the brink,
    Drain their own kisses as they drink,
    And ivies climb and twine and cling
    About the song I never sing.

An ocean-surge of sound that falls
  As though a tide of heavenly art
Had tempested the gleaming halls
And crested o'er the golden walls
  In showers on my heart. . . .
    Thus—thus, with open arms and eyes
    Uplifted toward the alien skies,
    Forgetting every earthly thing,
    I hear the song I never sing.

O nameless lay, sing clear and strong,
  Pour down thy melody divine
Till purifying floods of song
Have washed away the stains of wrong
  That dim this soul of mine!
    O woo me near and nearer thee,
    Till my glad lips may catch the key,
    And, with a voice unwavering,
    Join in the song I never sing.

UNSPOKEN

SHE can hold her hand, and full and fair
Look in her face and fling her smile for
smile,
And loosen from his lips such words the while
As make him wonder how his tongue may dare
Such dalliance. And when in wordless prayer
His heart lies gasping, he can reconcile
His talk to that glib, recitative style
The silly gossip chatters everywhere.
But O, one utterance—one stormy word
Is fastened down in silence pitiless;
No struggling murmur of it ever heard—
No echo welling out of his distress
To plead aloud its mission long deferred,
And leap up fountain-like in thankfulness.

Yet he is bold enough in dreams—last night
He held her in his arms, and in the strands
Of her down-streaming hair he bathed his
hands,
And fretted it in golden foam, as bright
And billowy it floated o'er his sight.
Her breath was like a breeze of fairy-lands
That reels above a bed of bloom and fans

Its fragrant life away in sheer delight.
So even did he whisper through the sighs
That quavered as his spirit stayed to drain
The mad intoxication of her eyes;
Then felt a pang of pleasure keen as pain—
A barb of ecstasy, shot arrow-wise,
In such a kiss as cleft his heart in twain.

But waking, when the morning of her face
Shines full upon him, voiceless has he grown,
Save that inanimately mirthful tone
That ripples ever on its foolish race
And finds nor rest nor joyance in the chase.
And so it is a never-ending moan
Wails on unheard, unheeded and unknown
But by the echoes of its hiding-place.
What poverty like this?—to laugh, and sing,
And babble like a brook in summer-time;
To circle o'er the world on airy wing,
Or clamber into Heaven on rounds of rhyme,
When in the soul, forever lingering,
There lives a love unspeakably sublime.

THANKSGIVING DAY AT HUNCHLEY'S

IF you never heard of Hunchley, I would say in his behalf,
He's as jovial a bachelor as ever raised a laugh,
And as fond of boon companions, yet withal as tried and true
A gentleman of honor as the writer ever knew.

And if he has a weakness, as a weakness it depends
On a certain strength of kindness he bestows upon his friends;
Being simple, undesigning, and of courteous address,
All hearts are open to him and his friends are numberless.

And this is how it happened some discrepancies befell
At the late Thanksgiving dinner which began at his hotel,
Where, it seems, the guests invited were selected more to be
In keeping with his bounty than the laws of harmony.

For there among the number were two rivals of the
press,
Who had paragraphed each other with prolonged
maliciousness,
And in their respective columns had a thousand
times declared
That the other fellow "daresn't," when the other
fellow dared.

And cheek by jowl together were two members of
the bar,
Politically, legally, and socially at war,
Who denounced each other daily, and in every
local phrase
That could make the matter binding all the balance
of their days.

Of the medical fraternity ("fraternity" is good)
There were four or five disciples of the healing
brotherhood—
Botanic and eclectic, and some others that persist
In orthographic wranglings, such as "homeopa-
thist";

And an ordinary actor, and an actor of renown,
Whose cue, it seemed, for smiling was the other
actor's frown;
And the most loquacious author my remembrance
can recall,
And a little bench-leg poet that couldn't talk at all.

In fact the guests assembled, as they gathered round
the feast
Wore expressions such as savored not of thankful-
ness the least,
And to a close observer were suggestive of the
dread
And shadowy disaster that was hanging overhead.

Now the simple Mr. Hunchley had invited, with the
rest,
A melancholy pastor, and, in honor of the guest
And the notable occasion, he desired a special
"grace,"
Which the thankful pastor offered with a very
thankless face.

And at this unhappy juncture came a journalistic
pun,
Which the rival designated as a most atrocious one,
At which the grim projector, with a covert look of
hate,
Shook a little dust of "fine-cut" in the other fellow's
plate.

And the viands circulated, with a sudden gust of wit
From a lawyer—instituted for the other's benefit,—
Then the victim spun a story with exasperating
mirth
That reflected his opponent as of small judicial
worth.

Then a medical discussion on the stomach swelled
the gale
And the literary appetite began to droop and fail;
While a sportive reminiscence from the absented-
minded host
Blanched the features of the pastor to the pallor of
a ghost.

And a deep sonorous murmur slowly grew, and
grew, and grew
Till the similes that suited it were singularly few,—
For even now at leisure, and with nothing else to do,
A task of lesser promise I can say I never knew.

I have heard the tread of armies as they marched
upon the foe,
And, among the Alps, have listened to the avalanche
of snow;
I have leaned upon Niagara, and heard the wailing
tide
Where it leaps its awful chasm in unending suicide:

I have heard the trampling footsteps of the roaring
hurricane
As he lashed his tail of lightning, and tossed his
shaggy mane;
I have heard the cannonading of the devastating
storm,
And the falling politician howling loudly for
reform:

But no mystic voice of terror ever bred of Nature's law
Could awake the sense of wonder and dismay, and doubt and awe
That thrilled my inmost being as the conversation swelled
To a mad, chaotic focus in which everybody yelled.

There's a vision in my fancy, misty-like and undefined,
Of an actor with his collar loose and sticking up behind,
And another (though I hesitate to chronicle the fact)
Writhing underneath the table in a wild contortion act.

There's a shadowy remembrance of a group of three or four
Who were seemingly dissecting another on the floor;
And the form of Mr. Hunchley dancing round a couple more,
And a phantom with a chicken-leg a-breaking for the door.

And here my memory wavers—I recall the heated breath
Of the gentleman who held me with the very grip of death,

And as my reeling pencil scrawls the scene of my release
I'm as full of glad thanksgiving as my soul is full of peace.

But this is how it happened these discrepancies befell
At the late Thanksgiving dinner Hunchley gave at his hotel,
Where, it seems, the guests invited were selected more to be
In keeping with his bounty than the laws of harmony.

APART

I

THEY stood on either side the gate—
Though fastened with the hands of fate
A touch might lift the latch's weight.

The moonlight, with a faded grace,
Fell o'er the whiteness of her face
Like some soiled veil of bridal lace.

The fan she held went fluttering
About her mouth on restless wing
As though it were a wounded thing.

And in her breast an ache of dread
Held back the word she would have said,
And sent a weary sigh instead.

II

He waited, with his eager eyes
Half muffled in a weak disguise
Of carelessness and cold surprise.

Within his breast he heard the moan:
"How desolate and all alone,
And pitiless my heart has grown!"

And yet a nameless ache of dread
Held back the word he would have said,
And sent a weary sigh instead.

The long, black shadows of the trees
Whose branches wavered in the breeze,
Fell o'er them like their destinies.

They parted. Yet the wild wind saith
That two fair ghosts with failing breath
Walk hand in hand the path of death.

TOIL

HE had toiled away for a weary while,
Through day's dull glare and night's deep gloom;
And many a long and lonesome mile
He had paced in the round of his dismal room;
He had fared on hunger—had drunk of pain
As the drouthy earth might drink of rain;
And the brow he leaned in his trembling palm
Throbbed with a misery so intense
That never again did it seem that calm
Might come to him with the gracious balm
Of old-time languor and indolence.
And he said, "I will leave the tale half told,
And leave the song for the winds to sing;
And the pen—that pitiless blade of gold
That stabs my heart like a dagger-sting—
I will drive to the hilt through the inkstand's top
And spill its blood to the last black drop!"
Then he masked his voice with a laugh, and went

Out in the world with a lawless grace—
With a brazen lie in his eyes and face
Told in a smile of glad content:
He roved the round of pleasures through,
And tasted each as it pleased him to;
He joined old songs, and the clink and din
Of the revelers at the banquet hall;
And he tripped his feet where the violin
Spun its waltz for the carnival;
He looked, bedazed, on the luring wile
And the siren-light of a woman's smile,
And peered in her eyes as a diver might
Peer in the sea ere he leaps outright,—
Caught his breath, with a glance above,
And dropped full-length in the depths of love

. . . . . .

'Tis well if ever the false lights die
On the alien coasts where our wreck'd hopes lie!
'Tis well to feel, through the blinding rain,
Our outflung hands touch earth again!
So the castaway came, safe from doom,
Back at last to his lonely room,
Filled with its treasure of work to do
And radiant with the light and bloom
Of the summer sun and his glad soul, too!
And sweet as ever the song of birds,
Over his work he sang these words:—

"O friends are good, with their princely ways,
And royal hearts they are goodly things;
And fellowship, in the long dark days
When the drear soul cowers with drooping
wings,
Is a thing to yearn for.—*Mirth* is good,—
For a ringing laugh is a rhythmic cry
Blown like a hail from the Angelhood
To the barque of the lone soul drifting by.—
Goodly, too, is a mute caress
Of woman's hands and their tenderness—
The warm breath wet with the dews of love—
The vine-like arms, and the fruit thereof—
The touch that thrills, and the kiss that melts,—
But Toil is sweeter than all things else."

HIS ROOM

I'M home again, my dear old Room,
I'm home again, and happy, too,
As, peering through the brightening gloom,
I find myself alone with you:
Though brief my stay, nor far away,
I missed you—missed you night and day—
As wildly yearned for you as now.—
Old Room, how are you, anyhow?

My easy chair, with open arms,
Awaits me just within the door;
The littered carpet's woven charms
Have never seemed so bright before,—
The old rosettes and mignonettes
And ivy-leaves and violets,
Look up as pure and fresh of hue
As though baptized in morning-dew.

Old Room, to me your homely walls
Fold round me like the arms of love,
And over all my being falls
A blessing pure as from above—

Even as a nestling child caressed
And lulled upon a loving breast,
With folded eyes, too glad to weep
And yet too sad for dreams or sleep.

You've been so kind to me, old Room—
So patient in your tender care,
My drooping heart in fullest bloom
Has blossomed for you unaware;
And who but you had cared to woo
A heart so dark, and heavy too,
As in the past you lifted mine
From out the shadow to the shine?

For I was but a wayward boy
When first you gladly welcomed me
And taught me work was truer joy
Than rioting incessantly:
And thus the din that stormed within
The old guitar and violin
Has fallen in a fainter tone
And sweeter, for your sake alone.

Though in my absence I have stood
In festal halls a favored guest,
I missed, in this old quietude,
My worthy work and worthy rest—
By *this* I know that long ago
You loved me first, and told me so
In art's mute eloquence of speech
The voice of praise may never reach.

For lips and eyes in truth's disguise
  Confuse the faces of my friends,
Till old affection's fondest ties
  I find unraveling at the ends;
    But, as I turn to you, and learn
    To meet my griefs with less concern.
    Your love seems all I have to keep
    Me smiling lest I needs must weep.

Yet I am happy, and would fain
  Forget the world and all its woes;
So set me to my tasks again,
  Old Room, and lull me to repose:
    And as we glide adown the tide
    Of dreams, forever side by side,
    I'll hold your hands as lovers do
    Their sweethearts' and talk love to you.

TO LEONAINIE

In memory of Leonainie, infant daughter of W. B and Lotta Titus, these lines are tenderly inscribed.

"LEONAINIE!" angels missed her—
Baby angels—they
Who behind the stars had kissed her
E'er she came away;
And their little, wandering faces
Drooped o'er Heaven's hiding-places
Whiter than the lily-vases
On the Sabbath day.

"Leonainie!" crying, crying,
Crying through the night,
Till her lisping lips replying,
Laughing with delight,
Drew us nearer yet, and nearer
That we might the better hear her
Baby-words, and love her dearer
Hearing not aright.

Only spake the little lisper
  In the Angel-tongue,
Fainter than a fairy-whisper
  Murmured in among
Dewy blossoms covered over
With the fragrant tufts of clover,
Where the minstrel honey-rover
  Twanged his wings and sung.

"Leonainie!"—And the glimmer
  Of her starry eyes
Faded, and the world grew dimmer
  E'en as Paradise
Blossomed with a glory brighter
Than the waning stars, and whiter
Than the dying moon, and lighter
  Than the morning skies.

THE SHOWER

THE landscape, like the awed face of a child
Grew curiously blurred; a hush of death
Fell on the fields, and in the darkened wild
The zephyr held its breath.

No wavering glamour-work of light and shade
Dappled the shivering surface of the brook;
The frightened ripples in their ambuscade
Of willows trilled and shook.

The sullen day grew darker, and anon
Dim flashes of pent anger lit the sky;
With rumbling wheels of wrath came rolling on
The storm's artillery.

The cloud above put on its blackest frown,
And then, as with a vengeful cry of pain,
The lightning snatched it, ripped and flung it down
In raveled shreds of rain:

While I, transfigured by some wondrous art,
Bowed with the thirsty lilies to the sod,
My empty soul brimmed over, and my heart
Drenched with the love of God.

YE SCHOLAR

HO! ho! Ye Scholar recketh not how lean
His lank frame waxeth in ye hectic gloom
That smeareth o'er ye dim walls of his room
His wavering shadow! Shut is he, I ween,
Like as a withered nosegay, in between
Ye musty, mildewed leaves of some volume
Of ancient lore ye moth and he consume
In jointure. Yet a something in his mien
Forbids all mockery, though quaint is he,
And eke fantastical in form and face
As that Old Knight ye Tale of Chivalry
Made mad immortally, yet spared ye grace
Of some rare virtue which we sigh to see,
And pour our laughter out most tenderly.

DEATH IS DEAD

AND did you know our old friend Death is dead?
Ah me! he died last night; my ghost was there,
And all his phantom-friends from everywhere
Were sorrowfully grouped about his bed.
"I die; God help the living now!" he said
With such a ghastly pathos, I declare
The tears oozed from the blind eyes of the air
And spattered on his face in gouts of red.
And then he smiled—the dear old bony smile
That glittered on us in that crazy whim
When first our daring feet leapt the defile
Of life and ran so eagerly to him:
And so he smiled upon us, even while
The kind old sockets grew forever dim.

TOM JOHNSON'S QUIT

A PASSEL o' the boys last night—
An' me amongst 'em—kind o' got
To talkin' Temper'nce left an' right,
An' workin' up "blue-ribbon," *hot;*
An' while we was a-countin' jes'
How many hed gone into hit
An' signed the pledge, some feller says,—
"Tom Johnson's quit!"

We laughed, of course—'cause Tom, you know,
Has spiled more whisky, boy an' man,
And seed more trouble, high an' low,
Than any chap but Tom could stand:
And so, says I, *"He's* too nigh dead
Fer Temper'nce to benefit!"
The feller sighed ag'in, and said—
"Tom Johnson's quit!"

We all *liked* Tom, an' that was why
We sort o' simmered down ag'in,
And ast the feller ser'ously
Ef he wa'n't tryin' to draw us in:

He shuck his head—tuck off his hat—
  Helt up his hand an' opened hit,
An' says, says he, "I'll *swear* to that—
    Tom Johnson's quit!"

Well, we was stumpt, an' tickled, too,—
  Because we knowed ef Tom *hed* signed
There wa'n't no man 'at wore the "blue"
  'At was more honester inclined:
An' then and there we kind o' riz,—
  The hull dern gang of us 'at bit—
An' th'owed our hats and let 'er whiz,—
    "Tom Johnson's quit!"

I've heerd 'em holler when the balls
  Was buzzin' 'round us wus'n bees,
An' when the ole flag on the walls
  Was flappin' o'er the enemy's,
I've heerd a-many a wild "hooray"
  'At made my heart git up an' git—
But Lord!—to hear 'em shout that way!—
    "Tom Johnson's quit!"

But when we saw the chap 'at fetched
  The news wa'n't jinin' in the cheer,
But stood there solemn-like, an' reched
  An' kind o' wiped away a tear,
We someway sort o' stilled ag'in,
  And listened—I kin hear him yit,
His voice a-wobblin' with his chin,—
    "Tom Johnson's quit—

"I hain't a-givin' you no game—
I wisht I was! . . . An hour ago,
This operator—what's his name—
The one 'at works at night, you know?—
Went out to flag that Ten Express,
And sees a man in front of hit
Th'ow up his hands an' stagger—yes,—
Tom Johnson's quit!"

THE LITTLE DEAD MAN

YET NOT SO DEAD AS ANOTHER

I

IT was a little dead man,
  At peace with all the earth;
Yet I never saw a dead man
  So seeming near to mirth.

His hands were meekly hidden,
  At his very last request—
The right in his hip pocket,
  And the other in his vest.

His collar was thrown open,
  And he wore his easy clothes—
Had his ordinary boots on,
  With rosin on the toes.

II

And so the little dead man
Lay coffined for the tomb.
The hearse was at the doorway—
The mourners in the room—

When suddenly a stranger,
Who had called the day before
With a book beneath his elbow,
Entered softly at the door,

And stood before the mourners
In his bold and brazen might,
A note-book in the left hand
And a pencil in the right.

And he turned him to the mourners
With a business air, and said:
"I must really beg your pardon,
But the gentleman that's dead

"Was kind enough to tell me,
If I'd call around to-day
He'd be prepared to listen
To all I had to say.

"And in view of that engagement,
I would gently intimate
(As it may pitch the funeral
Some dozen hours late,)

"That you have my indulgence,"
And with eyelids downward thrown,
They left the little dead man
And the agent all alone.

As only stars may lighten
Up the grandeur of the plains,
And the mountains where the midnight
In her mystic beauty reigns,

So the stars must shed their glory
O'er imagination's vales,
And illuminate the story
Where the poet's pencil fails.

* * * * * *

But there was a little dead man—
Ah! so very dead indeed,
They fastened down his coffin lid
With most judicious speed.

And they whose latest office
Was to shroud his form from sight,
Saw a note-book in the left hand,
And a pencil in the right.

OLD-FASHIONED ROSES

THEY ain't no style about 'em,
And they're sort o' pale and faded
Yit the doorway here, without 'em,
Would be lonesomer, and shaded
With a good 'eal blacker shadder
Than the morning-glories makes,
And the sunshine would look sadder
Fer their good old-fashion' sakes.

I like 'em 'cause they kind o'
Sort o' *make* a feller like 'em!
And I tell you, when I find a
Bunch out whur the sun kin strike 'em,
It allus sets me thinkin'
O' the ones 'at used to grow
And peek in through the chinkin'
O' the cabin, don't you know!

And then I think o' mother,
And how she ust to love 'em—
When they wuzn't any other,
'Less she found 'em up above 'em!

And her eyes, afore she shut 'em,
Whispered with a smile and said
We must pick a bunch and putt 'em
In her hand when she wuz dead.

But, as I wuz a-sayin',
They ain't no style about 'em
Very gaudy er displayin',
But I wouldn't be without 'em,—
'Cause I'm happier in these posies,
And hollyhawks and sich,
Than the hummin'-bird 'at noses
In the roses of the rich.

THE EMPTY SONG

"WHAT have we but an empty song?"
Said the minstrel, as he bent
To stay the fingers that trailed along
The strings of her instrument.

"The clasp of your hand is warm in mine,
And your breath on my brow is wet—
I have drunk of your lips as men drink wine,
But my heart is thirsty yet."

The starlight shivered a little space,
And the sigh of the wind uprose
And blew a cloud o'er the moon's wan face,
And swooned back in repose.

. . . . . .

The years ooze on in a stagnant flood:
One drifts as the winds allow;
And one writes rhymes with his heart's own blood,
But his soul is thirsty now.

A ROSE IN OCTOBER

An Imitation of Magazine Poetry

I

I STRAYED, all alone, where the Autumn
Had swept, in her petulant wrath:
All the flowers, that had bloomed in the garden,
She had gathered, and flung in her path.
And I saw the dead face of the lily,
Struck down, by the rain and the sleet,
And the pink, with her lashes yet weeping,
Drooped low in the dust, at my feet.

II

The leaves on the branches still swinging,
Were blanched with the crimson of death;
And the vines that still clung to the trellis,
Were palsied, and shook at a breath.
And I sighed: "So hath fate, like the Autumn,
Swept over my path, till I see,
As I walk through life's desolate garden
Not a rose is left blooming for me!"

III

"Heigho!" said a voice of low laughter—
"How blind are you poets!" And there,
At the gate, just in front of me, leaning,
Stood Rosalind May, I declare!
I stammered, confused, for the moment;
But was blest for the rest of my life,
For my Rose of October there promised
She'd bloom for me aye, as—my wife.

ROMANCIN'

I'B'EN a-kindo' *"musin',"* as the feller says, and I'm
About o' the conclusion that they hain't no better time,
When you come to cipher on it, than the times we ust to know
When we swore our first *"dog-gone-it"* sorto' solum-like and low!

You git my idy, do you?—*Little* tads, you understand—
Jest a-wishin' thue and thue you that you on'y wuz a *man.*—
Yit here I am, this minit, even sixty, to a day,
And fergittin' all that's in it, wishin' jest the other way!

I hain't no hand to lectur' on the times, er *dim*onstrate
Whare the trouble is, er hector and domineer with Fate,—

But when I git so flurried, and so pestered-like and
blue,
And so rail owdacious worried, let me tell you what
I do!—

I jest gee-haw the hosses, and onhook the swingle-
tree,
Whare the hazel-bushes tosses down theyr shadders
over me;
And I draw my plug o' navy, and I climb the fence,
and set
Jest a-thinkin' here, i gravy! tel my eyes is wringin'-
wet!

Tho' I still kin see the trouble o' the *presunt,* I kin
see—
Kindo' like my sight wuz double—all the things
that *ust* to be;
And the flutter o' the robin and the teeter o' the
wren
Sets the willer-branches bobbin' "howdy-do" thum
Now to *Then!*

The deadnin' and the thicket's jest a-bilin' full of
June,
Thum the rattle o' the cricket, to the yallar-
hammer's tune;
And the catbird in the bottom, and the sapsuck on
the snag,
Seems ef they can't—od-rot 'em!— jest do nothin'
else but brag!

"They hain't no better time . . . than the times we ust to know"

They's music in the twitter of the bluebird and the jay,
And that sassy little critter jest a-*peckin'* all the day;
They's music in the "flicker," and they's music in the thrush,
And they's music in the snicker o' the chipmunk in the brush!

They's music *all around* me!—And I go back, in a dream
Sweeter yit than ever found me fast asleep,—and in the stream
That ust to split the medder whare the dandylions growed,
I stand knee-deep, and redder than the sunset down the road.

Then's when I' b'en a-fishin'!—And they's other fellers, too,
With theyr hick'ry-poles a-swishin' out behind 'em; and a few
Little "shiners" on our stringers, with theyr tails tiptoein' bloom,
As we dance 'em in our fingers all the happy jurney home.

I kin see us, true to Natur', thum the time we started out,
With a biscuit and a 'tater in our little "round-about"!—

I kin see our lines a-tanglin', and our elbows in a jam,
And our naked legs a-danglin' thum the apern o' the dam.

I kin see the honeysuckle climbin' up around the mill,
And kin hear the worter chuckle, and the wheel a-growlin' still;
And thum the bank below it I kin steal the old canoe,
And jest git in and row it like the miller ust to do.

W'y, I git my fancy focused on the past so mortul plane
I kin even smell the locus'-blossoms bloomin' in the lane;
And I hear the cow-bells clinkin' sweeter tunes 'n "Money-musk"
Fer the lightnin'-bugs a-blinkin' and a-dancin' in the dusk.

And when I've kep' on "musin'," as the feller says, tel I'm
Firm-fixed in the conclusion that they hain't no better time,
When you come to cipher on it, than the *old* times,—I de-clare
I kin wake and say "dog-gone-it!" jest as soft as any prayer!

THE LITTLE OLD POEM THAT NOBODY READS

THE little old poem that nobody reads
Blooms in a crowded space,
Like a ground-vine blossom, so low in the weeds
That nobody sees its face—
Unless, perchance, the reader's eye
Stares through a yawn, and hurries by,
For no one wants, or loves, or heeds
The little old poem that nobody reads.

The little old poem that nobody reads
Was written—where?—and when?
Maybe a hand of goodly deeds
Thrilled as it held the pen:
Maybe the fountain whence it came
Was a heart brimmed o'er with tears of shame,
And maybe its creed is the worst of creeds—
The little old poem that nobody reads.

But, little old poem that nobody reads,
Holding you here above
The wound of a heart that warmly bleeds
For all that knows not love,
I well believe if the old World knew
As dear a friend as I find in you,
That friend would tell it that all it needs
Is the little old poem that nobody reads.

A SLEEPING BEAUTY

I

AN alien wind that blew and blew
Over the fields where the ripe grain grew,

Sending ripples of shine and shade
That crept and crouched at her feet and played.

The sea-like summer washed the moss
Till the sun-drenched lilies hung like floss,

Draping the throne of green and gold
That lulled her there like a queen of old.

II

Was it the hum of a bumblebee,
Or the long-hushed bugle eerily

Winding a call to the daring Prince
Lost in the wood long ages since?—

A dim old wood, with a palace rare
Hidden away in its depths somewhere!

Was it the Princess, tranced in sleep,
Awaiting her lover's touch to leap

Into the arms that bent above?—
To thaw his heart with the breath of love—

And cloy his lips, through her waking tears,
With the dead-ripe kiss of a hundred years!

III

An alien wind that blew and blew.—
I had blurred my eyes as the artists do,

Coaxing life to a half-sketched face,
Or dreaming bloom for a grassy place.

The bee droned on in an undertone;
And a shadow-bird trailed all alone

Across the wheat, while a liquid cry
Dripped from above, as it went by.

What to her was the far-off whir
Of the quail's quick wing or the chipmunk's
chirr?—

What to her was the shade that slid
Over the hill where the reapers hid?—

Or what the hunter, with one foot raised,
As he turned to go—yet, pausing, gazed?

LEEDLE DUTCH BABY

LEEDLE Dutch baby haff come ter town!
Jabber und jump till der day gone down—
Jabber und sphlutter und sphlit hees jaws—
Vot a Dutch baby dees Londsmon vas!
I dink dose mout' vas leedle too vide
Ober he laugh fon dot also-side!
Haff got blenty off deemple und vrown?—
Hey! leedle Dutchman come ter town!

Leedle Dutch baby, I dink me proud
Ober your fader can schquall dot loud
Ven he vas leedle Dutch baby like you
Und yoost don't gare, like he alvays do!—
Guess ven dey vean him on beer, you bet
Dot's der because dot he aind veaned yet!—
Vot you said off he dringk you down?—
Hey! leedle Dutchman come ter town!

Leedle Dutch baby, yoost schquall avay—
Schquall fon preakfast till gisterday!
Better you all time gry und shout
Dan shmile me vonce fon der coffin out!
Vot I gare off you keek my nose
Downside-up mit your heels und toes—
Downside, oder der oopside-down?—
Hey! leedle Dutchman come ter town!

LINES

ON HEARING A COW BAWL IN A DEEP FIT OF DEJECTION ON THE EVENING OF JULY 3, A. D. 1879

PORTENTOUS sound! mysteriously vast
And awful in the grandeur of refrain
That lifts the listener's hair as it swells past,
And pours in turbid currents down the lane.

The small boy at the wood-pile, in a dream
Slow trails the meat-rind o'er the listless saw;
The chickens roosting o'er him on the beam
Uplift their drowsy heads with cootered awe.

The "gung-oigh!" of the pump is strangely stilled:
The smoke-house door bangs once emphatic'ly,
Then bangs no more, but leaves the silence filled
With one lorn plaint's despotic minstrelsy.

Yet I would join thy sorrowing madrigal,
Most melancholy cow, and sing of thee
Full-hearted through my tears, for, after all,
'Tis very kine in you to sing for me.

FRIEND OF A WAYWARD HOUR

FRIEND of a wayward hour, you came
Like some good ghost, and went the same;
And I within the haunted place
Sit smiling on your vanished face,
And talking with—your name.

But thrice the pressure of your hand—
First hail—congratulations—and
Your last "God bless you!" as the train
That brought you snatched you back again
Into the unknown land.

"God bless me?" Why, your very prayer
Was answered ere you asked it there,
I know—for when you came to lend
Me your kind hand, and call me friend,
God blessed me unaware.

LINES

ON RECEIVING A PRESENT FROM AN UNKNOWN FRIEND

THOU little naked statuette,
With fairy head a-tip,
And eyelids ever downward let,
And silence on thy lip,
Thou comest from a friend unknown,
Nor wilt confess,
E'en in mute syllables of stone,
That friend's address.

And so, still pools of gratitude
I pour out at thy feet;
And could it mirror back thy nude
Perfection half as sweet
As rests within this heart of mine
That friend unknown,
Why, smiles would light that face of thine
And warm the stone.

PAN

THIS Pan is but an idle god, I guess,
Since all the fair midsummer of my dreams
He loiters listlessly by woody streams,
Soaking the lush glooms up with laziness;
Or drowsing while the maiden-winds caress
Him prankishly, and powder him with gleams
Of sifted sunshine. And he ever seems
Drugged with a joy unutterable—unless
His low pipes whistle hints of it far out
Across the ripples to the dragon-fly
That, like a wind-born blossom blown about,
Drops quiveringly down, as though to die—
Then lifts and wavers on, as if in doubt
Whether to fan his wings or fly without.

"When our baby died—"

WHEN OUR BABY DIED

WHEN our baby died—
My Ma she ist cried an' cried!
Yes 'n' my Pa *he* cried, too—
An' *I* cried—An' me an' you.—
An' I 'tended like my doll
She cried too—An' ever'—all—
O ist *ever'body* cried
When our baby died!

When our baby died—
Nen I got to took a ride!
An' we all ist rode an' rode
Clean to Heav'n where baby goed—
Mighty nigh!—An' nen Ma she
Cried ag'in—an' Pa—an' me.—
All but ist the *Angels* cried
When our baby died!

A FULL HARVEST

SEEMS like a feller'd ort'o jes' to-day
Git down and roll and waller, don't you know,
In that-air stubble, and flop up and crow,
Seein' sich crops! I'll undertake to say
There're no wheat's ever turned out thataway
Afore this season!—Folks is keerless, though,
And too fergitful—'caze we'd ort'o show
More thankfulness!—Jes' looky hyonder, hey?—
And watch that little reaper wadin' thue
That last old yaller hunk o' harvest-ground—
Jes natchur'ly a-slicin' it in two
Like honeycomb, and gaumin' it around
The field—like it had nothin' else to do
On'y jes' waste it all on me and you!

MY BACHELOR CHUM

A CORPULENT man is my bachelor chum,
With a neck apoplectic and thick—
An abdomen on him as big as a drum,
And a fist big enough for the stick;
With a walk that for grace is clear out of the case,
And a wobble uncertain—as though
His little bow-legs had forgotten the pace
That in youth used to favor him so.

He is forty, at least; and the top of his head
Is a bald and a glittering thing;
And his nose and his two chubby cheeks are as red
As three rival roses in spring:
His mouth is a grin with the corners tucked in,
And his laugh is so breezy and bright
That it ripples his features and dimples his chin
With a billowy look of delight.

He is fond of declaring he "don't care a straw"—
That "the ills of a bachelor's life
Are blisses, compared with a mother-in-law,
And a boarding-school miss for a wife!"

So he smokes and he drinks, and he jokes and he winks,
And he dines and he wines, all alone,
With a thumb ever ready to snap as he thinks
Of the comforts he never has known.

But up in his den—(Ah, my bachelor chum!)—
I have sat with him there in the gloom,
When the laugh of his lips died away to become
But a phantom of mirth in the room.
And to look on him there you would love him, for all
His ridiculous ways, and be dumb
As the little girl-face that smiles down from the wall
On the tears of my bachelor chum.

TOMMY SMITH

DIMPLE-CHEEKED and rosy-lipped,
With his cap-rim backward tipped,
Still in fancy I can see
Little Tommy smile on me—
Little Tommy Smith.

Little unsung Tommy Smith—
Scarce a name to rhyme it with;
Yet most tenderly to me
Something sings unceasingly—
Little Tommy Smith.

On the verge of some far land
Still forever does he stand,
With his cap-rim rakishly
Tilted; so he smiles on me—
Little Tommy Smith.

Elder-blooms contrast the grace
Of the rover's radiant face—
Whistling back, in mimicry,
"Old—Bob—White!" all liquidly—
Little Tommy Smith.

O my jaunty statuette
Of first love, I see you yet,
Though you smile so mistily,
It is but through tears I see,
Little Tommy Smith.

But, with crown tipped back behind,
And the glad hand of the wind
Smoothing back your hair, I see
Heaven's best angel smile on me,—
Little Tommy Smith.

THE LAUGHTER OF THE RAIN

The rain sounds like a laugh to me—
A low laugh poured out limpidly.

MY very soul smiles as I listen to
The low, mysterious laughter of the rain,
Poured musically over heart and brain
Till sodden care, soaked with it through and through,
Sinks; and, with wings wet with it as with dew,
My spirit flutters up, with every stain
Rinsed from its plumage, and as white again
As when the old laugh of the rain was new.
Then laugh on, happy Rain! laugh louder yet!—
Laugh out in torrent-bursts of watery mirth;
Unlock thy lips of purple cloud, and let
Thy liquid merriment baptize the earth,
And wash the sad face of the world, and set
The universe to music dripping-wet!

ETERNITY

O WHAT a weary while it is to stand,
Telling the countless ages o'er and o'er,
Till all the finger-tips held out before
Our dazzled eyes by heaven's starry hand
Drop one by one, yet at some dread command
Are held again, and counted evermore!
How feverish the music seems to pour
Along the throbbing veins of anthems grand!
And how the cherubim sing on and on—
The seraphim and angels—still in white—
Still harping—still enraptured—far withdrawn
In hovering armies tranced in endless flight!
. . . God's mercy! is there never dusk or dawn,
Or any crumb of gloom to feed upon?

LAST WORDS

HE left me for a foreign land:
I could not even free
One little tear to gem the hand
That God had given me;
For "I will follow soon, my dear,"
I laughed with girlish air,—
"The sun that cheers our pathway here
Shall beam upon us there!"

And so we parted. . . . Listen, God!—
I may not even free
One little tear to dew the sod
Where, sleeping peacefully,
He waits in foreign lands—my dear!
But prophecy and prayer,—
"The sun that cheers our pathway here
Shall beam upon us—*there!*"

AT BAY

DESPERATE, at last I stand
Ready, Fate, with open hand
To grasp yours, or to strike
Blow for blow—just as you like.

You have dogged me day by day—
Chased me when a child at play:
Even from the mother-nest
Pushed me when I needed rest.

You have crouched along my track
Like a hound, and hurled me back,
While your dog's-tongue lapped the blood
Of my murdered babyhood.

Pitilessly, year by year,
From the farthest past to here,
You have fallen like a blight
On each blossom of delight.

You have risen up between
Me and every hope serene
That has promised rest at last
From the trials of the past.

You have shut the light of day
From my present—stolen away
All my faith in better things
Than sheer desperation brings.

But as now I come to know
That I may no farther go,
I have turned—not to resist,
But to greet you hand or fist.

A WORN-OUT PENCIL

WELLADAY!
Here I lay
You at rest—all worn away,
O my pencil, to the tip
Of our old companionship!

Memory
Sighs to see
What you are, and used to be,
Looking backward to the time
When you wrote your earliest rhyme!—

When I sat
Filing at
Your first point, and dreaming that
Your initial song should be
Worthy of posterity.

With regret
I forget
If the song be living yet,
Yet remember, vaguely now,
It was honest, anyhow.

You have brought
Me a thought—
Truer yet was never taught,—
That the silent song is best,
And the unsung worthiest.

So if I,
When I die,
May as uncomplainingly
Drop aside as now you do,
Write of me, as I of you:—

Here lies one
Who begun
Life a-singing, heard of none;
And he died, satisfied,
With his dead songs by his side.

GOD BLESS US EVERY ONE

"GOD bless us every one!" prayed Tiny Tim,
Crippled, and dwarfed of body, yet so tall
Of soul, we tiptoe earth to look on him,
High towering over all.

He loved the loveless world, nor dreamed indeed
That it, at best, could give to him, the while,
But pitying glances, when his only need
Was but a cheery smile.

And thus he prayed, "God bless us every one!"—
Enfolding all the creeds within the span
Of his child-heart; and so, despising none,
Was nearer saint than man.

I like to fancy God, in Paradise,
Lifting a finger o'er the rhythmic swing
Of chiming harp and song, with eager eyes
Turned earthward, listening—

The Anthem stilled—the Angels leaning there
Above the golden walls—the morning sun
Of Christmas bursting flower-like with the prayer,
"God bless us every one!"

THE TREE-TOAD

"'SCUR'OUS-LIKE," said the tree-toad,
"I've twittered fer rain all day;
And I got up soon,
And hollered tel noon—
But the sun, hit blazed away,
Tel I jest clumb down in a crawfish-hole,
Weary at hart, and sick at soul!

"Dozed away fer an hour,
And I tackled the thing ag'in:
And I sung, and sung,
Tel I knowed my lung
Was jest about give in;
And *then,* thinks I, ef hit don't rain *now,*
They's nothin' in singin', anyhow!

"Onc't in a while some farmer
Would come a-drivin' past;
And he'd hear my cry,
And stop and sigh—
Tel I jest laid back, at last,
And I hollered rain tel I thought my
th'oat
Would bust wide open at ever' note!

"But I *fetched* her!—O *I fetched* her!—
'Cause a little while ago,
As I kindo' set,
With one eye shet,
And a-singin' soft and low,
A voice drapped down on my fevered
brain,
A-sayin',—*'Ef you'll jest hush I'll
rain!'* "

LAUGHING SONG

SING us something full of laughter;
Tune your harp, and twang the strings
Till your glad voice, chirping after,
Mates the song the robin sings:
Loose your lips and let them flutter
Like the wings of wanton birds,—
Though they naught but laughter utter,
Laugh, and we'll not miss the words.

Sing in ringing tones that mingle
In a melody that flings
Joyous echoes in a jingle
Sweeter than the minstrel sings:
Sing of Winter, Spring or Summer,
Clang of war, or low of herds;
Trill of cricket, roll of drummer—
Laugh, and we'll not miss the words.

Like the lisping laughter glancing
From the meadow brooks and springs,
Or the river's ripples dancing
To the tune the current sings—
Sing of Now, and the Hereafter;
Let your glad song, like the birds',
Overflow with limpid laughter—
Laugh, and we'll not miss the words.

THE WITCH OF ERKMURDEN

I

WHO cantereth forth in the night so late—
So late in the night, and so nigh the dawn?
'Tis The Witch of Erkmurden who leapeth the gate
Of the old churchyard where the three Sprites wait
Till the whir of her broom is gone.

And who peereth down from the belfry tall,
With the ghost-white face and the ghastly stare,
With lean hands clinched in the grated wall
Where the red vine rasps and the rank leaves fall,
And the clock-stroke drowns his prayer?

II

The wee babe wails, and the storm grows loud,
Nor deeper the dark of the night may be,
For the lightning's claw, with a great wet cloud,
Hath wiped the moon and the wild-eyed crowd
Of the stars out wrathfully.

Knuckled and kinked as the hunchback shade
Of a thorn-tree bendeth the bedlam old
Over the couch where the mother-maid,
With her prayerful eyes, and the babe are laid,
Waiting the doom untold.

"Mother, O Mother, I only crave
  Mercy for him and the babe—not me!"
"Hush! for it maketh my brain to rave
Of my two white shrouds, and my one wide grave,
  And a mound for my children three."

"Mother, O Mother, I only pray
  Pity for him who is son to thee
And more than my brother.—" "Wilt hush, I say!
Though I meet thee not at the Judgment Day,
  I will bury my children three!"

"Then hark! O Mother, I hear his cry—
  Hear his curse from the church-tower now,—
'Ride thou witch till thy hate shall die,
Yet hell as Heaven eternally
  Be sealed to such as thou!'"

An infant's wail—then a laugh, god wot,
  That strangled the echoes of deepest hell;
And a thousand shuttles of lightning shot,
And the moon bulged out like a great red blot,
  And a shower of blood-stars fell.

III

There is one wide grave scooped under the eaves—
  Under the eaves as they weep and weep;
And, veiled by the mist that the dead storm weaves,
The hag bends low, and the earth receives
  Mother and child asleep.

There's the print of the hand at either throat,
And the frothy ooze at the lips of each,
But both smile up where the new stars float,
And the moon sails out like a silver boat
Unloosed from a stormy beach.

IV

Bright was the morn when the sexton gray
Twirled the rope of the old church-bell,—
But it answered not, and he tugged away—
And lo, at his feet a dead man lay—
Dropped down with a single knell.

And the scared wight found, in the lean hand gripped,
A scrip which read: "O the grave is wide,
But it empty waits, for the low eaves dripped
Their prayerful tears, and the three Sprites slipped
Away with my babe and bride."

THE BALLAD OF SMILES AND TEARS

BY LEE O. HARRIS AND JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY

I

WHEN the gleeful Spring on dancing feet
Pranks the sward of the forest aisles,
And the bluebird pipes from his old retreat,
O then may the glad face bloom with smiles:
But whenever the wind of winter piles
The drifting snow on the frozen meres,
And the feet are worn with the weary miles,
Then hearts that are heavy may melt in tears.

II

When the soul is brimmed with a joy too sweet
To waste like that of a laughing child's,
When the lips of love for the first time meet,
O then may the glad face bloom with smiles:
But whenever the kiss of love defiles,
And friendship wanes with the waning years,
When faith has perished, and hope beguiles,
Then hearts that are heavy may melt in tears.

III

When the brow is crowned and the song complete,
And the minstrel's guerdon reconciles
The victor-soul to the heart's defeat,
O then may the glad face bloom with smiles:
But whenever the world in scorn compiles
Its ready pages of scoffs and jeers,
And the brain is weary of envy's wiles,
Then hearts that are heavy may melt in tears.

L'ENVOY

When the eyelids droop like a drowsy child's,
O then may the glad face bloom with smiles:
But whenever the waking is fraught with fears,
Then hearts that are heavy may melt in tears.

THIS MAN JONES

THIS man Jones was what you'd call
A feller 'at had no sand at all;
Kind o' consumpted, and undersize,
And sallor-complected, with big sad eyes,
And a kind-of-a sort-of-a hang-dog style,
And a sneakin' sort-of-a half-way smile
'At kind o' give him away to us
As a preacher, maybe, er somepin' wuss.

Didn't take with the gang—well, no—
But still we managed to use him, though,—
Coddin' the gilly along the rout',
And drivin' the stakes 'at he pulled out—
Fer I was one of the bosses then,
And of course stood in with the canvasmen;
And the way we put up jobs, you know,
On this man Jones jes' beat the show!

Ust to rattle him scandalous,
And keep the feller a-dodgin' us,
And a-shyin' round half skeered to death,
And afeerd to whimper above his breath;

Give him a cussin', and then a kick,
And then a kind-of-a backhand lick—
Jes' fer the fun of seein' him climb
Around with a head on most the time.

But what was the curioust thing to me,
Was along o' the party—let me see,—
Who was our "Lion Queen" last year?—
Mamzelle Zanty, or De La Pierre?—
Well, no matter—a stunnin' mash,
With a red-ripe lip, and a long eyelash,
And a figger sich as the angels owns—
And one too many fer this man Jones.

He'd allus wake in the afternoon,
As the band waltzed in on the lion-tune,
And there, from the time 'at she'd go in
Till she'd back out of the cage ag'in,
He'd stand, shaky and limber-kneed—
'Specially when she come to "feed
The beasts raw meat with her naked hand"—
And all that business, you understand.

And it *was* resky in that den—
Fer I think she juggled three cubs then,
And a big "green" lion 'at used to smash
Collar-bones fer old Frank Nash;
And I reckon now she hain't fergot
The afternoon old "Nero" sot
His paws on *her!*—but as fer me,
It's a sort-of-a mixed-up mystery:—

Kind o' remember an awful roar,
And see her back fer the bolted door—
See the cage rock—heerd her call
"God have mercy!" and that was all—
Fer they ain't no livin' man can tell
What it's like when a thousand yell
In female tones, and a thousand more
Howl in bass till their throats is sore!

But the keeper said 'at dragged her out,
They heerd some feller laugh and shout—
"Save her! Quick! I've got the cuss!"
And yit she waked and smiled on *us!*
And we daren't flinch, fer the doctor said,
Seein' as this man Jones was dead,
Better to jes' not let her know
Nothin' o' that fer a week er so.

WAIT

WE know, O faltering heart,
Thy need is great:
But weary is the way that leads to art,
And all who journey there must bear their part—
Must bear their part, and—wait.

The way is wild and steep,
And desolate:
No flowers blossom there, nor lilies peep
Above the walls to warn you, as you weep,
With one white whisper—"Wait."

You will find thorns, alas!
And keen as fate:
And, reaching from rank fens of withered grass,
Briers will clutch your feet, nor let you pass—
And you must wait—must wait.

And though with failing sight
You see the gate
Of Promise locked and barred, with swarthy Night
Guarding the golden keys of morning-light,—
Press bravely on—and wait.

LELLOINE

I

TINY queen,
Lelloine!
Little eyes laugh out between
Dimpled fingers that were busy
But a weary moment since
Mischief-making—for she is a
Match for Puck, the fairy prince!
She must ever be advancing
Some new prank; and laughing, dancing,
Disappearing at the door,
Like a sunbeam leaving shaded
All that was so bright before—
Like a sunbeam leaving faded
Flowers on the floor.
O, you joking, dear provoking,
Little laughing Lelloine!

II

Calm, serene,
Lelloine!
Lying lily-like between
The blurred leaves of life and love

That our wet eyes bend above,
Lisp nor laughter on the lips:
Two white rose-leaves now eclipse
Such of glances as the chance
Dimple dances in advance.
Darling! Darling! tell us why
You do neither laugh nor cry;
Even though you moaned in pain,
We could be so glad again!
What unchanging smile is this
That we shudder so to kiss?
Hearts are leaning low to glean
All your meaning, Lelloine.

A DREAM OF AUTUMN

MELLOW hazes, lowly trailing
Over wood and meadow, veiling
Somber skies, with wild fowl sailing
Sailor-like to foreign lands;
And the north wind overleaping
Summer's brink, and flood-like sweeping
Wrecks of roses where the weeping-
Willows wring their helpless hands.

Flared, like Titan torches flinging
Flakes of flame and embers, springing
From the vale, the trees stand swinging
In the moaning atmosphere;
While in dead'ning lands the lowing
Of the cattle, sadder growing,
Fills the sense to overflowing
With the sorrow of the year.

Sorrowfully, yet the sweeter
Sings the brook in rippled meter
Under boughs that lithely teeter
Lorn birds, answering from the shores

Through the viny, shady-shiny
Interspaces, shot with tiny
Flying motes that fleck the winy
  Wave-engraven sycamores.

Fields of ragged stubble, wrangled
With rank weeds, and shocks of tangled
Corn, with crests like rent plumes dangled
  Over Harvest's battle-plain;
And the sudden whir and whistle
Of the quail that, like a missile,
Whizzes over thorn and thistle,
  And, a missile, drops again.

Muffled voices, hid in thickets
Where the redbird stops to stick its
Ruddy beak betwixt the pickets
  Of the truant's rustic trap;
And the sound of laughter ringing
Where, within the wild vine swinging,
Climb Bacchante's schoolmates, flinging
  Purple clusters in her lap.

Rich as wine, the sunset flashes
Round the tilted world, and dashes
Up the sloping West, and splashes
  Red foam over sky and sea—
Till my dream of Autumn, paling
In the splendor all-prevailing,
Like a sallow leaf goes sailing
  Down the silence solemnly.

SINCE MY MOTHER DIED

SINCE my mother died, the tone
Of my voice has fainter grown,
And my words, so strangely few,
Are as strange to me as you.
Something like a lens is drawn
Over all I look upon,
And the world is O so wide,
Since my mother died.

Since my mother died, my face
Knows not any resting-place,
Save in visions, lightly pressed
In its old accustomed rest
On her shoulder. But I wake
With a never-ending ache
In my heart, and naught beside,
Since my mother died.

Since my mother died, the years
Have been dropping like my tears,
Till the bloom is washed away
From my cheeks, and slow decay

Seams the corners of my eyes,
Where my childish laughter lies
Drowned in tears that never dried
Since my mother died.

Since my mother died, my feet
Falter in the crowded street,
With bewildered steps that seem
Tangled in some grassy dream,
And, in busy haunts of men,
Slowly down the past again
Do I wander weary-eyed,
Since my mother died.

Since my mother died, O friends!
No one leads me now, or lends
Me a kindly word, or touch
Of the hands I need so much;
No one counsels me, or cares
For my trials, doubts, despairs,
And the world is O so wide,
Since my mother died.

BELLS JANGLED

I LIE low-coiled in a nest of dreams;
The lamp gleams dim i' the odorous gloom,
And the stars at the casement leak long gleams
Of misty light through the haunted room
Where I lie low-coiled in dreams.

The night winds ooze o'er my dusk-drowned face
In a dewy flood that ebbs and flows,
Washing a surf of dim white lace
Under my throat and the dark red rose
In the shade of my dusk-drowned face.

There's a silken strand of some strange sound
Slipping out of a skein of song:
Eerily as a call unwound
From a fairy bugle, it slides along
In a silken strand of sound.

There's the tinkling drip of a faint guitar;
There's a gurgling flute, and a blaring horn
Blowing bubbles of tune afar
O'er the misty heights of the hills of morn,
To the drip of a faint guitar.

And I dream that I neither sleep nor wake—
  Careless am I if I wake or sleep,
For my soul floats out on the waves that break
  In crests of song on the shoreless deep
Where I neither sleep nor wake.

DUSK SONG—THE BEETLE

THE shrilling locust slowly sheathes
His dagger-voice, and creeps away
Beneath the brooding leaves where breathes
The zephyr of the dying day:
One naked star has waded through
The purple shallows of the night,
And faltering as falls the dew
It drips its misty light.

O'er garden blooms,
On tides of musk,
The beetle booms adown the glooms
And bumps along the dusk.

The katydid is rasping at
The silence from the tangled broom:
On drunken wings the flitting bat
Goes staggering athwart the gloom;
The toadstool bulges through the weeds,
And lavishly to left and right
The fireflies, like golden seeds,
Are sown about the night.

O'er slumbrous blooms,
On floods of musk,
The beetle booms adown the glooms
And bumps along the dusk.

The primrose flares its baby-hands
Wide open, as the empty moon,
Slow lifted from the underlands,
Drifts up the azure-arched lagoon;
The shadows on the garden walk
Are frayed with rifts of silver light;
And, trickling down the poppy-stalk,
The dewdrop streaks the night.

O'er folded blooms,
On swirls of musk,
The beetle booms adown the glooms
And bumps along the dusk.

SLEEP

THOU drowsy god, whose blurred eyes, half awink,
Muse on me,—drifting out upon thy dreams,
I lave my soul as in enchanted streams
Where reveling satyrs pipe along the brink,
And, tipsy with the melody they drink,
Uplift their dangling hooves and down the beams
Of sunshine dance like motes. Thy languor seems
An ocean-depth of love wherein I sink
Like some fond Argonaut, right willingly,—
Because of wooing eyes upturned to mine,
And siren-arms that coil their sorcery
About my neck, with kisses so divine,
The heavens reel above me, and the sea
Swallows and licks its wet lips over me.

MARTHY ELLEN

THEY'S nothin' in the name to strike
A feller more'n common like!
'Taint liable to git no praise
Ner nothin' like it nowadays;
An' yit that name o' her'n is jest
As purty as the purtiest—
And more'n that, I'm here to say
I'll live a-thinkin' thataway
And die fer Marthy Ellen!

It may be I was prejudust
In favor of it from the fust—
'Cause I kin ricollect jest how
We met, and hear her mother now
A-callin' of her down the road—
And, aggervatin' little toad!—
I see her now, jest sort o' half-
Way disapp'inted, turn and laugh
And mock her—"Marthy Ellen!"

Our people never had no fuss,
And yit they never tuck to us;
We neighbered back and foreds some;
Until they see she liked to come
To our house—and me and her
Was jest together ever'whur
And all the time—and when they'd see
That I liked her and she liked me,
They'd holler "Marthy Ellen!"

When we growed up, and they shet down
On me and her a-runnin' roun'
Together, and her father said
He'd never leave her nary red,
So he'p him, ef she married me,
And so on—and her mother she
Jest agged the gyrl, and said she 'lowed
She'd ruther see her in her shroud,
I *writ* to Marthy Ellen—

That is, I kind o' tuck my pen
In hand, and stated whur and when
The undersigned would be that night,
With two good hosses, saddled right
Fer lively travelin', in case
Her folks 'ud like to jine the race.
She sent the same note back, and writ
"The rose is red!" right under it—
"Your'n allus, Marthy Ellen."

That's all, I reckon—Nothin' more
To tell but what you've heerd afore—
The same old story, sweeter though
Fer all the trouble, don't you know.
Old-fashioned name! and yit it's jest
As purty as the purtiest;
And more'n that, I'm here to say
I'll live a-thinkin' thataway,
And die fer Marthy Ellen!

THE LITTLE TOWN O' TAILHOLT

YOU kin boast about yer cities, and their stiddy growth and size,
And brag about yer County-seats, and business enterprise,
And railroads, and factories, and all sich foolery—
But the little Town o' Tailholt is big enough fer me!

You kin harp about yer churches, with their steeples in the clouds,
And gas about yer graded streets, and blow about yer crowds;
You kin talk about yer "*the*aters," and all you've got to see—
But the little Town o' Tailholt is *show* enough fer me!

They hain't no *style* in our town—hit's little-like and small—
They hain't no *"churches,"* nuther,—jes' the meetin'-house is all;
They's no sidewalks, to speak of—but the highway's allus free,
And the little Town o' Tailholt is wide enough fer me!

Some finds it discommodin'-like, I'm willing to admit
To hev but one post-office, and a womern keepin' hit,
And the drug-store, and shoe-shop, and grocery, all three—
But the little Town o' Tailholt is handy 'nough fer me!

You kin smile and turn yer nose up, and joke and hev yer fun,
And laugh and holler "Tail-holts is better holts'n none!"
Ef the city suits you better, w'y, hit's where you'd ort'o be—
But the little Town o' Tailholt's good enough fer me!

WHERE SHALL WE LAND

Where shall we land you, sweet?
—SWINBURNE

ALL listlessly we float
Out seaward in the boat
That beareth Love.
Our sails of purest snow
Bend to the blue below
And to the blue above.
Where shall we land?

We drift upon a tide
Shoreless on every side,
Save where the eye
Of Fancy sweeps far lands
Shelved slopingly with sands
Of gold and porphyry.
Where shall we land?

The fairy isles we see,
Loom up so mistily—
So vaguely fair,

We do not care to break
Fresh bubbles in our wake
To bend our course for there.
Where shall we land?

The warm winds of the deep
Have lulled our sails to sleep,
And so we glide
Careless of wave or wind,
Or change of any kind,
Or turn of any tide.
Where shall we land?

We droop our dreamy eyes
Where our reflection lies
Steeped in the sea,
And, in an endless fit
Of languor, smile on it
And its sweet mimicry.
Where shall we land?

"Where shall we land?" God's grace!
I know not any place
So fair as this—
Swung here between the blue
Of sea and sky, with you
To ask me, with a kiss,
"Where shall we land?"

HOPE

HOPE, bending o'er me one time, snowed the flakes
Of her white touches on my folded sight,
And whispered, half rebukingly, "What makes
My little girl so sorrowful to-night?"

O scarce did I unclasp my lids, or lift
Their tear-glued fringes, as with blind embrace
I caught within my arms the mother-gift,
And with wild kisses dappled all her face.

That was a baby dream of long ago:
My fate is fanged with frost, and tongued with flame:
My woman-soul, chased naked through the snow,
Stumbles and staggers on without an aim.

And yet, here in my agony, sometimes
A faint voice reaches down from some far height,
And whispers through a glamouring of rhymes,—
"What makes my little girl so sad to-night?"

THE LITTLE TINY KICKSHAW

—And any little tiny kickshaw.
—SHAKESPEARE.

O THE little tiny kickshaw that Mither sent tae me,
'Tis sweeter than the sugar-plum that reepens on the tree,
Wi' denty flavorin's o' spice an' musky rosemarie,
The little tiny kickshaw that Mither sent tae me.

'Tis luscious wi' the stalen tang o' fruits frae ower the sea,
An' e'en its fragrance gars me laugh wi' langin' lip an' ee,
Till a' its frazen scheen o' white maun melten hinnie be—
Sae weel I luve the kickshaw that Mither sent tae me.

O I luve the tiny kickshaw, an' I smack my lips wi' glee,
Aye mickle do I luve the taste o' sic a luxourie,
But maist I luve the luvein' han's that could the giftie gie
O' the little tiny kickshaw that Mither sent tae me.

DEATH

LO, I am dying! And to feel the King
Of Terrors fasten on me, steeps all sense
Of life, and love, and loss, and everything,
In such deep calms of restful indolence,
His keenest fangs of pain are sweet to me
As fusèd kisses of mad lovers' lips
When, flung shut-eyed in spasmed ecstasy,
They feel the world spin past them in eclipse,
And so thank God with ever-tightening lids!
But what I see, the soul of me forbids
All utterance of; and what I hear and feel,
The rattle in my throat could ill reveal
Though it were music to your ears as to
Mine own.—Press closer—closer—I have grown
So great, your puny arms about me thrown
Seem powerless to hold me here with you;—
I slip away—I waver—and—I fall—
Christ! What a plunge! Where am I dropping? All
My breath bursts into dust—I can not cry—
I whirl—I reel and veer up overhead,
And drop flat-faced against—against—the sky—
Soh, bless me! I am dead!

TO THE WINE-GOD MERLUS

A Toast of Jucklet's

HO! ho! thou jolly god, with kinkèd lips
And laughter-streaming eyes, thou liftest up
The heart of me like any wassail-cup,
And from its teeming brim, in foaming drips,
Thou blowest all my cares. I cry to thee,
Between the sips:—Drink long and lustily;
Drink thou my ripest joys, my richest mirth,
My maddest staves of wanton minstrelsy;
Drink every song I've tinkered here on earth
With any patch of music; drink! and be
Thou drainer of my soul, and to the lees
Drink all my lover-thrills and ecstasies;
And with a final gulp—ho! ho!—drink me,
And roll me o'er thy tongue eternally.

THE GINOINE AR-TICKLE

TALKIN' o' poetry,—There're few men yit
'At's got the stuff b'iled down so's it'll pour
Out sorgum-like, and keeps a year and more
Jes' sweeter ever' time you tackle it!
Why, all the jinglin' truck 'at hes been writ
Fer twenty year and better is so pore
You cain't find no sap in it any more
'N you'd find juice in puff-balls!—*And I'd Quit!*
What people wants is facts, I apperhend;
And naked Natur is the thing to give
Your writin' bottom, eh? And I contend
'At honest work is allus bound to live.
Now them's my views; 'cause you kin recommend
Sich poetry as that from end to end.

A BRIDE

"O I AM weary!" she sighed, as her billowy
Hair she unloosed in a torrent of gold
That rippled and fell o'er a figure as willowy,
Graceful and fair as a goddess of old:
Over her jewels she flung herself drearily,
Crumpled the laces that snowed on her breast,
Crushed with her fingers the lily that wearily
Clung in her hair like a dove in its nest.
—And naught but her shadowy form in the
mirror
To kneel in dumb agony down and weep near
her!

"Weary?"—of what? Could we fathom the
mystery?—
Lift up the lashes weighed down by her tears
And wash with their dews one white face from her
history,
Set like a gem in the red rust of years?
Nothing will rest her—unless he who died of her
Strayed from his grave, and, in place of the
groom,
Tipping her face, kneeling there by the side of her,
Drained the old kiss to the dregs of his doom.
—And naught but that shadowy form in the
mirror
To kneel in dumb agony down and weep near
her!

STANZAS FOR A NEW SONG

WHISTLE us something old, you know!
Pucker your lips with the old-time twist,
And whistle the jigs of the long ago,
Or the old hornpipes that you used to whist.
Some old, old tune that we oft averred
Was a little the oldest thing we'd heard
Since "the bob-tailed nag" was a frisky colt,
In the babbling days of old "Ben Bolt."

Whistle us something old and gray—
Some toothless tune of the bygone years—
Some bald old song that limps to-day
With a walking-stick this vale of tears.
Whistle a stave of the good old days,
E'er the fur stood up in a thousand ways
On the listener's pelt as he ripped and tore,
And diddle-dee-blank-blanked Pinafore.

CHORUS

Whistle us something old, you know!
Pucker your lips with the old-time twist,
And whistle the jigs of the long ago,
Or the old hornpipes that you used to whist.

LINES TO AN ONSETTLED YOUNG MAN

"O WHAT is Life at last," says you,
" 'At woman-folks and man-folks too,
Cain't oncomplainin', worry through?

"An' what is Love, 'at no one yit
'At's monkeyed with it kin forgit,
Er gits fat on remember'n hit?

"An' what is Death?"—W'y, looky hyur—
Ef Life an' Love don't suit you, sir,
Hit's jes' the thing yer lookin' fer!

PLANTATION HYMN

HEAR dat rum'lin' in de sky!
Hol' fas', brudders, till you git dah!
O, dat's de good Lord walkin' by,
Hol' fas', brudders, till you git dah!

CHORUS

Mahster! Jesus!
You done come down to please us,
And dahs de good Lord sees us,
As he goes walkin' by!

See dat lightnin' lick his tongue?
Hol' fas', brudders, till you git dah!
'Spec he taste de song 'ut de angels sung—
Hol' fas', brudders, till you git dah!

De big black clouds is bust in two,
Hol' fas', brudders, till you git dah!
And dahs de 'postles peekin' frue,
Hol' fas', brudders, till you git dah!

Know dem angels ev'ry one,
  Hol' fas', brudders, till you git dah!
Kase dey's got wings and we'se got none,
  Hol' fas', brudders, till you git dah!

CHORUS

  Mahster! Jesus!
  You done come down to please us,
  And dahs de good Lord sees us,
    As he goes walkin' by!

LAWYER AND CHILD

HOW large was Alexander, father,
That parties designate
The historic gentleman as rather
Inordinately great?

Why, son, to speak with conscientious
Regard for history,
Waiving all claims, of course, to heights
pretentious,—
About the size of me.

THE LOST KISS

I PUT by the half-written poem,
While the pen, idly trailed in my hand,
Writes on,—"Had I words to complete it,
Who'd read it, or who'd understand?"
But the little bare feet on the stairway,
And the faint, smothered laugh in the hall,
And the eery-low lisp on the silence,
Cry up to me over it all.

So I gather it up—where was broken
The tear-faded thread of my theme,
Telling how, as one night I sat writing,
A fairy broke in on my dream,
A little inquisitive fairy—
My own little girl, with the gold
Of the sun in her hair, and the dewy
Blue eyes of the fairies of old.

'Twas the dear little girl that I scolded—
"For was it a moment like this,"
I said, "when she knew I was busy,
To come romping in for a kiss?—

Come rowdying up from her mother,
And clamoring there at my knee
For 'One 'ittle kiss for my dolly,
And one 'ittle uzzer for me!' "

God, pity the heart that repelled her,
And the cold hand that turned her away,
And take, from the lips that denied her,
This answerless prayer of to-day!
Take, Lord, from my mem'ry forever
That pitiful sob of despair,
And the patter and trip of the little bare feet,
And the one piercing cry on the stair!

I put by the half-written poem,
While the pen, idly trailed in my hand,
Writes on,—"Had I words to complete it,
Who'd read it, or who'd understand?"
But the little bare feet on the stairway,
And the faint, smothered laugh in the hall,
And the eery-low lisp on the silence,
Cry up to me over it all.

MICHAEL FLYNN AND THE BABY

LUK at 'ere, ould baby,—who
Shak's the fist av 'im at you?
Who's the spalpeen wid the stim
Av his poipe a pokin' 'im?
Who's the divil grinnin' 'ere
In the eyes av yez, me dear?
Arrah! darlint, spake and soy
Don't yez know yer feyther—boy?

Wheer's the gab yer mither had
Whin she blarneyed yer ould dad
Wid her tricks and 'ily words
Loike the liltin' av the birds?
Wheer's the tongue av Michael Flynn,
And the capers av the chin
He's a-waggin' at yez?—Hoy?
Don't yez know yer feyther—boy?

Arrah! baby, wid the eyes
Av the saints in Paradise,
And Saint Patrick's own bald pate,
Is it yer too howly swate
To be changin' words because
It's the hod, and not the cross,
Ornamints me showlder?—soy?
Don't yez know yer feyther—boy?

ON A SPLENDUD MATCH

[*On the night of the marraige of the foregoin couple, which shall be nameless here, these lines was ca'mly dashed off in the albun of the happy bride whilse the shiwer-ree was goin' on outside the residence.*]

HE was warned aginst the *womern*—
She was warned aginst the *man*.—
And ef *that* won't make a weddin',
W'y, they's nothin' else that can!

THE SINGER

WHILE with Ambition's hectic flame
He wastes the midnight oil,
And dreams, high-throned on heights of
fame,
To rest him from his toil,—

Death's Angel, like a vast eclipse,
Above him spreads her wings,
And fans the embers of his lips
To ashes as he sings.

GUINEVERE

WHAT is it I am waiting for?
My footfall in the corridor
Jars upward through the night, and swings
The brazen silence till it rings
Like any bell. My weak knees faint
Before the sad face of my saint,
And, 'twixt my lifted eyes and tears,
Dim lists of mounted cavaliers
Swim past. . . . A nodding plume that dips
To brush the dead prayers from my lips
Like dust—. God's mercy! rid my sight
Of Launcelot, or blind me quite!
I know what duty is! Ah, Christ!
The memory of our latest tryst
Is fanged within my very soul! . . .
I swear to you, in all control
I held myself! . . . 'Twas love, I wis,
That sprang upon that kiss of his,
And drank and drained it to the lees
Of three God-shaken destinies.
'Twas love, I tell you, wild, insane,
Stark mad and babbling, wanton, vain—
But tell me, Where is Arthur?—or,
What is it I am waiting for?

THE WEREWIFE

SHE came to me in a dazzling guise
Of gleaming tresses and glimmering eyes,
With long, limp lashes that drooped and made
For their baleful glances bowers of shade;
And a face so white—so white and sleek
That the roses blooming in either cheek
Flamed and burned with a crimson glow
Redder than ruddiest roses blow—
Redder than blood of the roses know
That Autumn spills in the drifted snow.
And what could my fluttering, moth-winged soul
Do but hover in her control?—
With its little, bewildered bead-eyes fixed
Where the gold and the white and the crimson
mixed?
And when the tune of her low laugh went
Up from that ivory instrument
That you would have called her throat, I swear
The notes built nests in her gilded hair,
And nestled and whistled and twittered there,
And wooed me and won me to my despair.
And thus it was that she lured me on,
Till the latest gasp of my love was gone,

And my soul lay dead, with a loathing face
Turned in vain from her dread embrace,—
For even its poor dead eyes could see
Her sharp teeth sheathed in the flesh of me,
And her dripping lips, as she turned to shake
The red froth off that her greed did make,
As my heart gripped hold of a deathless ache,
And the kiss of her stung like the fang of a snake.

THE BAN

I

STRANGE dreams of what I used to be,
And what I dreamed I *would* be, swim
Before my vision, faint and dim
As misty distances we see
In pictured scenes of fairy lands;
And ever on, with empty hands,
And eyes that ever lie to me,
And smiles that no one understands,
I grope adown my destiny.

II

Some say I waver as I walk
Along the crowded thoroughfares;
And some leer in my eyes, and talk
Of dulness, while I see in theirs—
Like fishes' eyes, alive or dead—
But surfaces of vacancy—
Blank disks that never seem to see,
But glint and glow and glare instead.

III

The ragged shawl I wear is wet
With driving, dripping rains, and yet
It seems a royal raiment, where,
Through twisted torrents of my hair,
I see rare gems that gleam and shine
Like jewels in a stream of wine;
The gaping shoes that clothe my feet
Are golden sandals, and the shrine
Where courtiers grovel and repeat
Vain prayers, and where, in joy thereat,
A fair Prince doffs his plumèd hat,
And kneels, and names me all things sweet.

IV

Sometimes the sun shines, and the lull
Of winter noon is like a tune
The stars might twinkle to the moon
If night were white and beautiful—
For when the clangor of the town
And strife of traffic softens down,
The wakeful hunger that I nurse,
In listening, forgets to curse,
Until—ah, joy! with drooping head
I drowse, and dream that I am dead
And buried safe beyond their eyes
Who either pity or despise.

AN IDIOT

I'M on'y thist a' idiot—
That's what folks calls a feller what
Ain't got no mind
Of any kind,
Ner don't know nothin' he's forgot.—
I'm one o' *them*—But I know why
The bees buzz *this* way when they fly,—
'Cause honey it gits on their wings.
Ain't thumbs and fingers funny things?

What's money? Hooh! it's thist a hole
Punched in a round thing 'at won't roll
'Cause they's a string
Poked through the thing
And fastened round your neck—that's all!
Ef I could git my money off,
I'd buy whole lots o' whoopin'-cough
And give it to the boy next door
Who died 'cause he ain't got no more.

What is it when you die? *I* know,—
You can't wake up ag'in, ner go
To sleep no more—
Ner kick, ner snore,

Ner lay and look and watch it snow;
And when folks slaps and pinches you—
You don't keer nothin' *what* they do.
No honey on the *angels'* wings!
Ain't thumbs and fingers funny things?

AN ORDER FOR A SONG

MAKE me a song of all good things,
And fill it full of murmurings,
Of merry voices, such as we
Remember in our infancy;
But make it tender, for the sake
Of hearts that brood and tears that break,
And tune it with the harmony,
The sighs of sorrow make.

Make me a song of summer-time,
And pour such music down the rhyme
As ripples over gleaming sands
And grassy brinks of meadow-lands;
But make it very sweet and low,
For need of them that sorrow so,
Because they reap with empty hands
The dreams of long ago.

Make me a song of such a tone,
That when we croon it all alone,
The tears of longing as they drip,
Will break in laughter on the lip;
And make it, oh, so pure and clear
And jubilant that every ear
Shall drink its rapture sip by sip,
And Heaven lean to hear.

THE CONQUEROR

HE hears the whir of the battle-drum,
And the shrill-voiced fife, and the bugle-call,
With a thirsty spirit that drinks it all
As men might drink the wine poured from
Old wicker flagons raimented
With the rust and dust of ages dead.

He plunges into the crimson sea
Of carnage, and with a dauntless pride,
He swims, with his good star, side by side,
To the blood-sprayed heights of Victory,
Where never his glory waxes dim,
Though a woman's weak hand conquers him.

And high and alone—as the sculptor makes
Him set in stone that the world may see—
He sits there, crowned eternally,
And sheltered under a flag that shakes
Her silken stripes and her silver stars
Into a tangle of endless wars.

AFTER DEATH

A FANCY

AH! this delights me more than words could tell,—
To just lie stark and still, with folded hands
That tremble not at greeting or farewell,
Nor fumble foolishly in loosened strands
Of woman's hair, nor grip with jealousy
To find her face turned elsewhere smilingly.

With slumbrous lids, and mouth in mute repose,
And lips that yearn no more for any kiss—
Though it might drip, as from the red-lipped rose
The dewdrop drips, 'twere not so sweet as this
Unutterable density of rest
That reigns in every vein of brain and breast!

And thus—soaked with still laughter through and through—
I lie here dreaming of the forms that pass
Above my grave, to drop, with tears, a few
White flowers that but curdle the green grass;—
And if they read such sermons, they could see
How I do pity them that pity me.

THE MAD LOVER

MY eyes are feverish and dull;
I'm tired, and my throat hurts so!
And life has grown so pitiful—
So very pitiful, I know
Not any hope of rest or peace,
But just to live on, ache by ache,
Feeling my heart click on, nor cease,
Nor ever wholly break.

You smiled so sweetly, Miriam Wayne,
I could not help but love your smile,
And fair as sunshine after rain
It glimmered on me all the while;
Why, it did soak as summer light
Through all my life, until, indeed,
I ripened as an apple might
From golden rind to seed.

Fate never wrought so pitiless
An evil, as when first your eyes
Poured back in mine the tenderness
That made the world a Paradise—

For Miriam, remembering
  The warm white hands that lay in mine
Like wisps of sunshine vanishing—
  Your kisses, spilled like wine

Down over forehead, face and lips,
  Till I lay drunken with delight
From crown of soul to finger-tips—
  . . . Shriek, Memory, in mad affright!—
Howl at the moon like any hound!
  Yelp "love" and "liar" every breath,
And "Heaven is lost and hell is found!"
  So moan yourself to death!

TO ROBERT BURNS

SWEET Singer that I loe the maist
O' ony, sin' wi' eager haste
I smacket bairn-lips ower the taste
O' hinnied sang,
I hail thee, though a blessed ghaist
In Heaven lang!

For, weel I ken, nae cantie phrase,
Nor courtly airs, nor lairdly ways,
Could gar me freer blame, or praise,
Or proffer hand,
Where "Rantin' Robbie" and his lays
Thegither stand.

And sae these hamely lines I send,
Wi' jinglin' words at ilka end,
In echo o' the sangs that wend
Frae thee to me
Like simmer-brooks, wi' mony a bend
O' wimplin' glee.

In fancy, as, wi' dewy een,
I part the clouds aboon the scene
Where thou wast born, and peer atween,

I see nae spot
In a' the Hielands half sae green
And unforgot!

I see nae storied castle-hall,
Wi' banners flauntin' ower the wall
And serf and page in ready call,
Sae grand to me
As ane puir cotter's hut, wi' all
Its poverty.

There where the simple daisy grew
Sae bonnie sweet, and modest, too,
Thy liltin' filled its wee head fu'
O' sic a grace,
It aye is weepin' tears o' dew
Wi' droopit face.

Frae where the heather bluebells fling
Their sangs o' fragrance to the Spring,
To where the lavrock soars to sing,
Still lives thy strain,
For a' the birds are twittering
Sangs like thine ain.

And aye, by light o' sun or moon,
By banks o' Ayr, or Bonnie Doon,
The waters lilt nae tender tune
But sweeter seems
Because they poured their limpid rune
Through a' thy dreams.

Wi' brimmin' lip, and laughin' ee,
Thou shookest even Grief wi' glee,
Yet had nae niggart sympathy
Where Sorrow bowed,
But gavest a' thy tears as free
As a' thy gowd.

And sae it is we loe thy name
To see bleeze up wi' sic a flame,
That a' pretentious stars o' fame
Maun blink asklent,
To see how simple worth may shame
Their brightest glent.

HER VALENTINE

SOMEBODY'S sent a funny little valentine to me.
It's a bunch of baby-roses in a vase of filigree,
And hovering above them—just as cute as he can be—
Is a fairy cupid tangled in a scarf of poetry.

And the prankish little fellow looks so knowing in his glee,
With his golden bow and arrow, aiming most unerringly
At a pair of hearts so labeled that I may read and see
That one is meant for "One Who Loves," and one is meant for me.

But I know the lad who sent it! It's as plain as A-B-C!—
For the roses they are *blushing,* and the vase stands *awkwardly,*
And the little god above it—though as cute as he can be—
Can not breathe the lightest whisper of his burning love for me.

SONGS TUNELESS

I

HE kisses me! Ah, now, at last,
He says good night as it should be,
His great warm eyes bent yearningly
Above my face—his arms locked fast
About me, and mine own eyes dim
With happy tears for love of him.

He kisses me! Last night, beneath
A swarm of stars, he said I stood
His one fair form of womanhood,
And springing, shut me in the sheath
Of a caress that almost hid
Me from the good his kisses did.

He kisses me! He kisses me!
This is the sweetest song I know,
And so I sing it very low
And faint, and O so tenderly
That, though you listen, none but he
May hear it as he kisses me.

II

"How can I make you love me more?"—
A thousand times she asks me this,
Her lips uplifted with the kiss
That I have tasted o'er and o'er,
Till now I drain it with no sense
Other than utter indolence.

"How can I make you love me more?"—
A thousand times her questioning face
Has nestled in its resting-place
Unanswered, till, though I adore
This thing of being loved, I doubt
Not I could get along without.

"How can she make me love her more?"—
Ah! little woman, if, indeed,
I might be frank as is the need
Of frankness, I would fall before
Her very feet, and there confess
My love were more if hers were less.

III

Since I am old I have no care
To babble silly tales of when
I loved, and lied, as other men
Have done, who boasted here and there,
They would have died for the fair thing
They after murdered, marrying.

Since I am old I reason thus—
No thing survives, of all the past,
But just regret enough to last
Us till the clods have smothered us;—
Then, with our dead loves, side by side,
We may, perhaps, be satisfied.

Since I am old, and strive to blow
Alive the embers of my youth
And early loves, I find, in sooth,
An old man's heart may burn so low,
'Tis better just to calmly sit
And rake the ashes over it.

SISTER JONES'S CONFESSION

I THOUGHT the deacon liked me, yit
I warn't adzackly shore of it—
Fer, mind ye, time and time ag'in,
When jiners 'ud be comin' in,
I'd seed him shakin' hands as free
With all the sistern as with me!
But jurin' last Revival, where
He called on *me* to lead in prayer
An' kneeled there with me, side by side,
A-whisper'n' "he felt sanctified
Jes' tetchin' of my gyarment's hem,"—
That settled things as fur as them-
Thare *other* wimmin was concerned!—
And—well!—I know I must 'a' turned
A dozen colors!—*Flurried?—la!*—
No mortal sinner never saw
A gladder widder than the one
A-kneelin' there and wonderun'
Who'd pray!—So glad, upon my word,
I railly couldn't thank the Lord!

THE DEAD JOKE AND THE FUNNY MAN

LONG years ago, a funny man,
Flushed with a strange delight,
Sat down and wrote a funny thing
All in the solemn night;
And as he wrote he clapped his hands
And laughed with all his might.
For it was such a funny thing,
O such a very funny thing,
This wonderfully funny thing,
He
Laughed
Outright.

And so it was this funny man
Printed this funny thing—
Forgot it, too, nor ever thought
It worth remembering,
Till but a day or two ago.
(Ah! what may changes bring!)
He found this selfsame funny thing
In an exchange—"O funny thing!"
He cried, "You dear old funny thing!"
And
Sobbed
Outright.

SLEEP

ORPHANED, I cry to thee:
Sweet Sleep! O kneel and be
A mother unto me!
Calm thou my childish fears;
Fold—fold mine eyelids to, all tenderly,
And dry my tears.

Come, Sleep, all drowsy-eyed
And faint with languor,—slide
Thy dim face down beside
Mine own, and let me rest
And nestle in thy heart, and there abide,
A favored guest.

Good night to every care,
And shadow of despair!
Good night to all things where
Within is no delight!—
Sleep opens her dark arms, and, swooning there,
I sob: Good night—good night!

ONE ANGEL

"A HOMELY little woman with big hands":
'Twas thus she named herself, and shook
her head
All solemnly, the day that we were wed,
While I—well, I laughed lightly as I said,—
"No prince am I astray from fairy lands,
O, 'homely little woman with big hands'!"

"My homely little woman with big hands"
I called her ever after,—first, intent
On irony and admonition blent;
Then out of—since she smiled—pure merriment;
And lastly, from sheer lack of reprimands.
Brave, homely little woman with big hands!

My homely little woman with big hands,
Somehow, grew almost beautiful to me
As time went by. Her features I could see
Grow ever fairer; and so tenderly
The strong hands clung, their touches were
commands,
Dear homely little woman with big hands!

* * * * * * *

A homely little woman, with big hands
  Folded all patiently across her breast—
  The plain face fair and beautiful in rest—
  But O, the lips that answer not when pressed!
"Make me," I cry to God, who understands,
"A homely little angel with big hands!"

LAUGHTER

WITHIN the coziest corner of my dreams
He sits, high-throned above all gods that be
Portrayed in marble-cold mythology,
Since from his joyous eyes a twinkle gleams
So warm with life and light it ever seems
Spraying in mists of sunshine over me,
And mingled with such rippling ecstasy
As overleaps his lips in laughing streams.
Ho! look on him, and say if he be old
Or youthful! Hand in hand with gray old Time
He toddled when an infant; and, behold!—
He hath not aged, but to the lusty prime
Of babyhood—his brow a trifle bold—
His hair a raveled nimbus of gray gold.

AN INVOCATION

SWEET Sleep, with mellow palms trailed listlessly
Above mine eyelids, folding out the light
Of coming day, and shutting in the night
That gave but now such wondrous dreams to me—
Bide with me yet with thy dear sorcery,
Until once more I grow forgetful quite
Of all the cares that blur my waking sight
With dim, regretful tears! I beg of thee
To lift again thy wand with magic filled,
And filter through my faith the words: Behold,
Aladdin, as thou badest me, I build
A new dream o'er the ruins of the old—
Thine all eternal palace, silver-silled,
And walled with harps, and roofed with crowns of gold!

FROM BELOW

IN the dim summer night they were leaning alone
From the balcony over the walk;
He, careless enough, one had guessed by the tone
Of his voice and his murmurous talk;
And she—well, her laugh flowed as sweet to the breeze
As the voice of the faint violin
That ran, with a ripple of ivory keys,
Through the opera warbled within.

. . . . . .

In the odorous locust-boughs trailed o'er the eaves,
The nightingale paused in his tune,
And the mute katydid hid away in the leaves
That were turned from the smile of the moon:
And the man sat alone, with his fingers clenched tight
O'er a heart that had failed in its beat,
While the passers-by saw but a spatter of light
Where he dropped his cigar in the street.

GLAMOUR

WAS it in the misty twilight, or the midnight,
or the morning,
Or was it in the glare of noon, or dazzle of the
day,
That, half asleep and half awake, and without word
or warning,
My fancy, slowly slipping earthly anchor, sailed
away?

O leave me and my lazy dream a little while
together,
Blending each within the other as we waken in
the dawn,
With languid lids anointed by the balmy summer
weather
As it wells above the casement that our vision
swoons upon!

Linger with me yet a little, O my lazy dream! nor
leave me;
Though we hear the swallows twitter, it is only in
their sleep:

And I want you just to cling to me and love me and deceive me
A little ere the morning when I waken but to weep.

Ah! dream of mine, I see you growing clearer yet and clearer;
Your fairy face comes back again from out the misty past,
And your smile shines on before you till, approaching ever nearer,
It gilds your grave into a glorious trysting-place at last.

And you lean there—waiting for me—here's the dainty rose-leaf letter
That you sent me, saying, "Meet me here, and share my deep delight,
For my love by this long silence is so truer, purer, better,
That you will taste of Heaven when you touch my lips to-night."

Was it in the misty twilight, or the midnight, or the morning,
Or was it in the glare of noon, or dazzle of the day,
That, half asleep and half awake, and without word or warning,
My fancy, slowly slipping earthly anchor, sailed away?

SILENCE

THOUSANDS and thousands of hushed years ago,
Out on the edge of Chaos, all alone
I stood on peaks of vapor, high upthrown
Above a sea that knew nor ebb nor flow,
Nor any motion won of winds that blow,
Nor any sound of watery wail or moan,
Nor lisp of wave, nor wandering undertone
Of any tide lost in the night below.
So still it was, I mind me, as I laid
My thirsty ear against mine own faint sigh
To drink of that, I sipped it, half afraid
'Twas but the ghost of a dead voice spilled by
The one starved star that tottered through the shade
And came tiptoeing toward me down the sky.

PUCK

O IT was Puck! I saw him yesternight
Swung up betwixt a phlox-top and the rim
Of a low crescent moon that cradled him,
Whirring his rakish wings with all his might,
And pursing his wee mouth, that dimpled white
And red, as though some dagger keen and slim
Had stung him there, while ever faint and dim
His eery warblings piped his high delight:
Till I, grown jubilant, shrill answer made,
At which all suddenly he dropped from view;
And peering after, 'neath the everglade,
What was it, do you think, I saw him do?
I saw him peeling dewdrops with a blade
Of starshine sharpened on his bat-wing shoe.

A MORTUL PRAYER

OH! Thou that veileth from all eyes
The glory of Thy face,
And setteth throned behind the skies
In Thy abiding-place:
Though I but dimly reco'nize
Thy purposes of grace;
And though with weak and wavering
Deserts, and vex'd with fears,
I lift the hands I can not wring
All dry of sorrow's tears,
Make puore my prayers that daily wing
Theyr way unto Thy ears!

Oh! with the hand that tames the flood
And smooths the storm to rest,
Make ba'mmy dews of all the blood
That stormeth in my brest,
And so refresh my hart to bud
And bloom the loveliest.
Lull all the clammer of my soul
To silunce; bring release

Unto the brane still in controle
Of doubts; bid sin to cease,
And let the waves of pashun roll
And kiss the shores of peace.

Make me to love my feller man—
Yea, though his bitterness
Doth bite as only adders can—
Let *me* the fault confess,
And go to him and clasp his hand
And love him none the less.
So keep me, Lord, ferever free
From vane concete er whim;
And he whose pius eyes can see
My faults, however dim,—
Oh! let him pray the least fer me,
And me the most fer him.

A ROUGH SKETCH

I CAUGHT, for a second, across the crowd—
Just for a second, and barely that—
A face, pox-pitted and evil-browed,
Hid in the shade of a slouch-rim'd hat—
With small gray eyes, of a look as keen
As the long, sharp nose that grew between.

And I said: 'Tis a sketch of Nature's own,
Drawn i' the dark o' the moon, I swear,
On a tatter of Fate that the winds have blown
Hither and thither and everywhere—
With its keen little sinister eyes of gray,
And nose like the beak of a bird of prey!

GRANDFATHER SQUEERS

"MY grandfather Squeers," said The Raggedy Man,
As he solemnly lighted his pipe and began—

"The most indestructible man, for his years,
And the grandest on earth, was my grandfather Squeers!

"He said, when he rounded his threescore-and-ten,
'I've the hang of it now and can do it again!'

"He had frozen his heels so repeatedly, he
Could tell by them just what the weather would be;

"And would laugh and declare, 'while *the Almanac* would
Most falsely prognosticate, *he* never could!'

"Such a hale constitution had grandfather Squeers
That, though he'd used *'navy'* for sixty-odd years,

"My Grandfather Squeers"

"He still chewed a dime's worth six days of the
week,
While the seventh he passed with a chew in each
cheek.

"Then my grandfather Squeers had a singular
knack
Of sitting around on the small of his back,

"With his legs like a letter Y stretched o'er the
grate
Wherein 'twas his custom to ex-pec-tor-ate.

"He was fond of tobacco in *manifold* ways,
And would sit on the door-step, of sunshiny days,

"And smoke leaf-tobacco he'd raised strictly for
The pipe he'd used all through the Mexican War."

And The Raggedy Man said, refilling the bowl
Of his *own* pipe and leisurely picking a coal

From the stove with his finger and thumb, "You
can see
What a tee-nacious habit he's fastened on me!

"And my grandfather Squeers took a special delight
In pruning his corns every Saturday night

"With a horn-handled razor, whose edge he excused
By saying 'twas one that his grandfather used;

"And, though deeply etched in the haft of the same
Was the ever-euphonious Wostenholm's name,

" 'Twas my grandfather's custom to boast of the
blade
As 'a Seth Thomas razor—the best ever made!'

"No Old Settlers' Meeting, or Pioneers' Fair,
Was complete without grandfather Squeers in the
chair,

"To lead off the program by telling folks how
'He used to shoot deer where the Court-house
stands now'—

"How 'he felt, of a truth, to live over the past,
When the country was wild and unbroken and vast,

" 'That the little log cabin was just plenty fine
For himself, his companion, and fambly of nine!—

" 'When they didn't have even a pump, or a tin,
But drunk surface-water, year out and year in,

" 'From the old-fashioned gourd that was sweeter,
by odds,
Than the goblets of gold at the lips of the gods!' "

Then The Raggedy Man paused to plaintively say
It was clockin' along to'rds the close of the day—

And he'd *ought* to get back to his work on the
lawn,—
Then dreamily blubbered his pipe and went on:

"His teeth were imperfect—my grandfather owned
That he couldn't eat oysters unless they were
'boned';

"And his eyes were so weak, and so feeble of sight,
He couldn't sleep with them unless, every night,

"He put on his spectacles—all he possessed,—
Three pairs—with his goggles on top of the rest.

"And my grandfather always, retiring at night,
Blew down the lamp-chimney to put out the light;

"Then he'd curl up on edge like a shaving, in bed,
And puff and smoke pipes in his sleep, it is said:

"And would snore oftentimes, as the legends relate,
Till his folks were wrought up to a terrible state,—

"Then he'd snort, and rear up, and roll over; and
there
In the subsequent hush they could hear him chew
air.

"And so glaringly bald was the top of his head
That many's the time he has musingly said,

"As his eyes journeyed o'er its reflex in the glass,—
'I must set out a few signs of *Keep Off the Grass!*'

"So remarkably deaf was my grandfather Squeers
That he had to wear lightning-rods over his ears

"To even hear thunder—and oftentimes then
He was forced to request it to thunder again."

MY LADDIE WI' THE BASHFU' GRACE

MY laddie wi' the bashfu' grace,
That darena spak the tender loe
That glints o'er a' thy bonny face
Like winter sunset on the snow,—
Gin ye wad only tak my hand,
And ask, wi' pressure fond and true,
My heart—my heart wad understand,
And gie its loe to you.

But sin' ye winna spak me free,
Or darena tak the langin' tip
O' ain puir finger,—come to me
In mirk o' nicht and touch my lip—
Then a' the glowin' universe
Will bloom wi' stars, and flow'rs, and a',
And God's ain sel' abide wi' us,
Nor ever gang awa'.

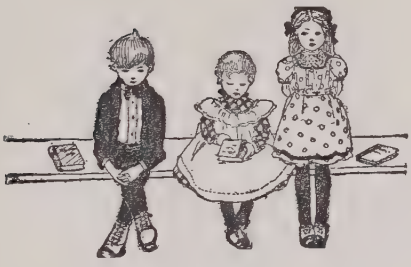
A TRESS OF HAIR

THIS tress of hair my sweetheart sent to me,
And so I bent above it tenderly
And kissed the dainty bow
That bound the wisp of sunshine, thrilled forsooth,
Because her lips had nestled there—in truth,
She told me so.

And I remember, reading that, the flush
That fevered all my face, and the heart's hush
And hurry in my ears;
And how the letter trembled and grew blurred
Until my eyes could read no other word—
For happy tears.

This tress of hair! Why, I did hug and hold
It here against my heart, and call it gold
With Heaven's own luster lit;
And I did stroke and smooth its gleaming strands,
And pet and fondle it with foolish hands,
And talk to it!

And now I pray God's blessing may alight
Upon the orange flowers she wears to-night.
Her features—keep them fair,
Dear Lord, but let her lips not quite forget
The love they kindled once is gilding yet
This tress of hair.



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